

Kidnapped Love

by BlazingLegend

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Summary: Cleo was talking to Lewis over webcam, when he suddenly gets kidnapped. {this is a badly written story in the process of being rewritten, so if you have any wisdom within you, find it and stay away if you know what's good for you.}

1. Chapter 1

Oh _holy mother of heaven _I was just reading over this and _oh oh oh _it sucks. It sucks, like major sucks. And this is coming from the gal with _the _biggest ego you will ever stumble across. The biggest. Ever.

I _suck(ed). _Enjoy reading what I wrote when I was eleven!

(AN has been left in place so you can laugh at my expense. Have fun!)

****Hey there! I know I wasn't supposed to upload anymore stories, but this one was running around in my brain like a caged wild horse and I needed to let it out. I got this idea from watching a YouTube clip, well, not really, because neither the song nor the theme had anything to do with this story, I just thought it up and the h2o clip I was watching had nothing to do with it. But I still loved the video. Here it is [watch?v=0dGbisSfHyE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dGbisSfHyE) anybody reading this, you should seriously watch this. I can guarantee you will love it. If you can guess at what point I thought up this story while I was watching it, I'll give you a prize. Now onto the story, by the way it's TOTAL Clewis. But there is mentioned and implied, Zikki (kind-of), Wella, Emash (Because Emma has come back in this story.)****

* * *

><p>"Lewis!" I squealed, seeing his face pop up on the screen.<p>

"Cleo!" He replied in the same girlish tone.

"Hey!" I laughed.

"I missed you so much, Cleo." He smiled with faint sadness.

"Um, we only talked about two weeks ago." I giggled.

"That's too long for me!" He exclaimed. I laughed.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beeeep. The annoying sound of my phone interrupted our conversation.

"Wait just a sec, Lewis. My phone is ringing." I got up and picked it up off my bed. The screen flashed on and I saw that I had a text from Rikki.

****Hey, what are you doing? I was thinking me and you could get some ice cream.**

>~ Rikki

****Not now, I'm busy.**

>~ Cleo

****Ah, talking to Lewis?**

>~ Rikki

****How did you know?**

>~ Cleo

****Psychic powers.**

>~ Rikki

****I see. So, I can't get ice cream. Or is there anything else you wanted to do so you can keep me from talking to Lewis?**

>~ Cleo

****Nope. Go have fun with your nerd love.**

>~ Rikki

****Hey!**

>~ Cleo

I knew she wouldn't reply back, so I threw my phone back down on my bed and sat back down at my desk.

"Rikki wanted to get ice cream." I rolled my eyes, also displaying an apologetic smile.

"Of course, that girl loves ice cream." Lewis rolled his eyes back.

I saw him do something with his fingers, but I couldn't see what. He may as well have been writing notes for one of his papers or something.

"So, what's been happening with you?" I asked him.

"Oh, you know, paper this, essay that. It's kind of aggravating." He

sighed.

"Well, I'm sure you'll be fine and be the best student your teacher has ever had." I smiled encouragingly.

"I'll try. What have you been doing?" He flung the question back to me.

"Not much. Ronnie is getting better at tricks, Kim is getting more annoying. She thinks she's Little Miss. I-can-do-whatever-I-want-and-have-more-than-one-boyfriend. And dad trusts me to keep her in check, but whenever I yell at her, she runs to dad!" I shouted, flinging my arms out.

"Your life sounds a lot more exciting than mine, I'll tell you that." He laughed, but smiled sympathetically at me all the same.

"Well, when you're a mermaid, you get that." I smiled.

"I wish I was back with you guys. I miss preparing for full moons, covering for you when you get wet, swimming with you, protecting the moon pool and all the other drama you guys have." He sighed heavily.

"I'll tell you what, next week I promise to swim to America and visit you. I'll make up some excuse." I whispered, even though there was practically no need. But you never know when Kim's right next to your room, pressing up a glass to the door and hearing everything you say.

"What? You can't do that! What about school?" He said, thinking about my plans for college etcetera.

"You're more important." I said simply.

"No, Cleo. I can't have you doing that." He said firmly, crossing his arms.

"Awww." I groaned, disappointed.

"You've been hanging around Rikki too much." He laughed. I gave him an icy glare and he shut up.

"So, how are Rikki, Bella and Emma?" He asked, quickly getting away from the subject.

"Bella and Will are dating-"

"Finally!" He exclaimed.

"Rikki and Zane are still broken up. She still seems to think it's for the best, but I catch her staring at him from time to time." I informed him.

"What do you think?" He asked.

"I think that they should get back together. Sure Zane is a jerk sometimes, but whenever he's around Rikki, that changes. Zane did something wrong, but I know for a fact that Rikki has forgiven him. The thing she hasn't forgiven is that he didn't recoil or push Sophie

away when she kissed him. And... Zane is the only boy who's made Rikki happy." I finished.

Beep. Beep. Beeeep. The annoying sound of my phone again. I got up and got it from my bed once more.

"Hello?"

"Hi, it's Bella. I was wondering if you would like to go for some ice cream."

"Are you kidding me? Is this some kind of trick? Rikki asked me that same question!"

"Oh. Why did you say no?"

"I'm busy."

"Oh, okay then. Bye." She hung up the phone. I sat back down, frustrated.

"What was that about?" He asked, concerned like the best-boyfriend-in-the-world he is.

"Bella called me." I paused. This sentence fragment got a strange look from Lewis; because I would usually never be upset if I got a call from Bella.

"She wanted to get ice cream! Can you believe it? I think she and Rikki might be playing a trick on me..." I trailed off in thought.

"That doesn't sound like a Rikki and Bella thing to do. That sounds like a Rikki and Emma, or just plain Rikki thing to do. If Rikki could convince Emma, of course." Lewis answered.

"Yeah, I guess you're right..."

"Guess?" He smirked.

"Oh, shut up!" I squealed.

"Have I ever told you that I love you?" He beamed genuinely at me.

"I've heard it on occasion." I smiled naughtily.

"Well then, I guess I'll just have to tell you again. I love you, Cleo."

"I love you too, Lewis."

"I think this time calls for a cyber-hug." His eyes twinkled.

"Definitely." Cyber-hug is this thing me and Lewis do. It's where we hug our computer as if we were hugging each other, just a weird thing we do. Last time we did it, Lewis spilt juice on his keyboard; he hurried to clean it up, while I just sat there laughing.

"Cyber-hug!" We both shouted and hugged our computers.

"I'm glad I didn't spill anything on my keyboard this time." Lewis wiped the back of his hand on his forehead comically in a '_Phew!_' action.

"My thoughts exactly." I stuck my tongue out at him.

"Great minds think alike, huh?" He raised his eyebrows repetitively.

"Hey! Stop flirting with me, I'm already your girlfriend!"

"Just wanted to be on the safe side, I saw Charlotte walking past earlier."

"What!?"

"Just kidding! You're so easy to trick." He laughed.

"Hey, I thought I was supposed to trust my boyfriend." I grumbled.

"You are. But you're also meant to suspect something when he brings his ex-girlfriend into the picture."

"Like he's cheating on me?"

"What?" He said quietly, the entire colour drained from his face.

"Now, you're easy to trick!" I cracked up laughing, while I watched the colour return to his face and then watched him take deep breaths. Talk about hilarious.

"Now, that was not funny." He pouted, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Oh, come on!" I whined playfully.

"Grrr." He bared his teeth playfully.

"Oh, I'm so scared!" I shrieked in a little girly voice.

"You better be."

"Or what, Mr. I-study-abroad-at-a-big-expensive-school, what could you possibly do to me?" I asked, putting my hands on my hips.

"Oh, I'll think of something."

"Uh huh."

Beep. Beep. Beeeeeeeep. I really should think of turning that phone to silent.

"Look who's popular!" Lewis shouted from the computer screen while I got my phone.

****Are you still talking to Lewis?**

>~ Rikki

****Yes!**

>~ Cleo

****Awww, come have a swim with me!**

>~ Rikki

****Uh, no.**

>~ Cleo

****I'm beginning to hate nerd love.**

>~ Rikki

****Hey!**

>~ Cleo

**>
Hang out with me! You've been talking to geek for too long!**

>~ Rikki

****No! He's not a geek!**

>~ Cleo

****Face it, Cleo. Your boyfriend is a geek.**

>~ Rikki

****Fine. He's a geek. Now leave me alone!**

>~ Cleo

****Sheesh! Why can't you take 5 minutes to swim with your best friend?**

>~ Rikki

****Because I don't want to!**

>~ Cleo

****Oh come on, we both know that's not true. No mermaid doesn't want to go for a swim.**

>~ Rikki

****That's a double negative. Don't use them, they're evil.**

>~ Cleo

****I won't if you swim with me!****

****~ Rikki****

****Can you just leave me alone? I'll swim with you after I've finished talking to Lewis!****

****~ Cleo****

****Fine. You promise?**

>~ Rikki

****No, but you'll have to live with that.**

>~ Cleo

****Fine, you big meanie. :P**

>~ Rikki

I turned my phone onto silent and re-joined Lewis.

"What was that all about?" He asked.

"Rikki wanted to swim with me."

"Why don't you join her?"

"Because I'm talking to you!"

"I can wait."

"No you can't." I said firmly.

"Fine, you got me." He smiled.

"You know what she said to me?" I asked, faking a hurt little girl voice.

"What did she say?"

"She used a double negative!" I exclaimed.

"Oh no!" He shouted, faking shock. "They're evil. I hope you told her off."

"I did exactly that. I told her they were evil and not to use them." I smiled, mocking pride.

"Good girl."

"You say that like I'm a dog." I stuck my tongue out at him.

"Are you telling me you aren't? And all this time I thought you were..."

"Lewis!"

"Just teasing." Now it was his turn to stick his tongue out.

"So, what do you want to talk about now?" I asked, settling back in my computer chair.

"I don't know. I wish I could be really talking to you, instead of a bunch of pixels that look like you." He sighed.

"Well, this is the best you've got. Unless I swim to America..." My eyes twinkled.

"No Cleo!"

"You're no fun." I looked down dejectedly.

"Aw, come on Cleo. Think about it."

"Yeah..."

"Hey, why don't we play a game?" Lewis suggested.

"You make me sound like a three year old. I must be one, because I want to play a game!" I clapped my hands childishly.

"What about the word game?" He asked.

"I don't know. That game always ends badly. The last time I played it with Rikki, we fought and she avoided me for the next week."

"That's because Rikki's childish."

"Fine. We'll play the word game."

"Bus." Lewis started.

(You should read all of this, but it does go on for a while.)

"Car." I added.

"Children."

"Cry."

"Tickle."

"Laugh."

"Apple."

"Pear."

"Orange."

"Watermelon."

"Passionfruit."

"Guava."

"Mango."

"Kiwifruit."

"Banana."

"Apricot."

"Peach."

"Pineapple."

"Plum."

"Lemon."

"Lettuce."

"Lime."

"Libraries."

"Books."

"Education."

"Science."

"School."

"Biology."

"Health."

"English."

"Latin."

"Spanish."

"German."

"Japanese."

"Chinese."

"American."

"Institute."

"Abroad."

"Missing."

"Desperate."

"Love."

"Years."

"Daytime."

"Spring."

"Summer."

"Winter."

"Autumn."

"Leaf."

"Fall."

"Tree."

"Plants."

"Life."

"Grass."

"Willows."

"Mangroves."

"Sea."

"Ocean."

"Mermaid."

"Moon
pool."

"Mako."

"Trail."

"Beach."

"Shore."

"Swimming."

"Tail."

"Fin."

"Dolphin."

"Crab."

"Turtle."

"Fish."

"Tank."

"Coral."

"Sand."

"Rock."

"Seaweed."

"Shells."

"Fossils."

"Diving."

"Blue."

"Underwater."

"Breathing."

"Oxygen."

"Sixty."

"Eighty."

"Mark."

"Kiss."

"Heartbroken."

"Unforgiving."

"Unable."

"Land."

"Buildings."

"Farms."

"Cows."

"Sheep."

"Chickens."

"Sheepdog."

"Bark."

"Herd."

"Bull."

"Shed."

"Barn."

"Horses."

"Stall."

"Hay."

"Eggs."

"Peck."

"Chick."

"Fluffy."

"Cuddly."

"Cute."

"Ticklish."

"Feathers."

"Okay, enough of this game, my brain is dying." Lewis gave up. I could have kept going.

"I won!" I stuck my tongue out at him.

"Yeah, you won. I give up." He panted slightly.

"But you're always so good at that game!" I exclaimed, because he usually won.

"You're pretty awesome yourself." He smiled at me.

"Thanks. I love you, Lewis."

"I love you too, Cleo. Hey I was wonder-" A hand covered his mouth from behind.

"Lewis!" I cried, not understanding what was happening. Two men in black restrained him and started dragging him out the door. He struggled, kicking one of the men in the legs.

"Lewis?! Lewis!" I shrieked. He put up a fight and was able to bite the hand that was covering his mouth.

"I love you Cleo!" He shouted as they pulled him out the door. His laptop crashed down to the floor.

"Lewis? Lewis!" I screamed in vain. He was gone.

Lewis was gone.

I stared at the screen, as if expecting him to materialise, hoping against hope that he
>was just playing a trick on me.<p>

Everything stayed the same.

Tears poured down my face as reality sunk in.

I looked down and buried my face in my hands, and cried and cried and cried.

He can't be gone. He just can't.

I took one last look at the screen, to see something that I hadn't noticed before.

A heart drawn in a pile of sand.

* * *

><p>If any of you don't know that reference, 'A heart drawn in a pile of sand' it's something Lewis does. Like, when they were at the moon pool, he traced a heart in some sand, symbolising his love for Cleo. He also did it at the JuiceNet, but with flour, I think. I hope you liked it, well, it would be sad if anybody _**liked _**it, who would like to see Lewis get kidnapped? But you know what I mean. At least I hope you do.**

2. Chapter 2

Kidnapped Love

Chapter Two

****Hiya guys! I've put this up quickly because everybody seemed to like it. Okay, I'm going to explain to you the story of what has happened and what hasn't. (SEASON 3 SPOILER ALERT) In this story, Emma came back after Season Three, but knows everything that has happened, they also wear the lockets for her sake and they also missed wearing them, but they also wear the crystals, just not as necklaces anymore... (**P.S this is the revised explanation of how Emma came back.)** Will and Bella are dating; Zane and Rikki are broken up. Sophie, Zane and Ryan did destroy the moon pool. And that's about it. You can pick up the rest without me telling you, right? Emma may seem a tad mean in this chapter, but she thinks it's for Cleo's good. And they don't keep secrets from each other, and that made Emma upset.****

* * *

><p>"Cleo! Are you alright? We heard screaming!" Sam knocked on my door. I was tangled in my blankets, sheet of sweat covering my forehead. Wait, was this all a dream?<p>

"I'm fine, Sam. Thanks for asking." I panted slightly.

"Are you sure? Did you have a nightmare? Do you want to talk about it?" She asked, concerned for my well-being.

"I'm fine, really. Go back to sleep, I'm sorry for worrying you." I sighed heavily.

"Okay, Cleo. Make sure to wake me if you need anything."

"I will." I answered simply and soon I heard footsteps leading down the hall and a door closing. Sam didn't sleep with my dad. She liked her space, and honestly I don't blame her, dad's snoring is enough to wake the dead. And keep a certain household awake for hours on end.

That reminds me of the time Lewis was forced to share a tent with him on Mako. It was HILARIOUS. But he was so sweet; he came along to protect us from the full moon when my dad forced us to go on a camping trip. It was supposed to be Setori Family only, but Emma and Rikki insisted and Lewis wanted to keep us safe. But then Charlotte got jealous and she had to come. That reminds me...

I looked over to my desk to see if it was just a dream. No, it wasn't.

My Lewis was still gone.

I let out a wail of despair; it broke my heart every time I woke and thought that maybe, I had a horrible nightmare.

I really need to face the fact that he's gone.

But, I've made my plans. I can't tell a soul, as much as I want to. I know I can't tell dad and Sam. I wish I could tell Bella, Rikki and Emma, but they'd probably go on about how dangerous it is. Maybe not Rikki. I imagine she'd be the tiniest bit proud of me, but still.

I fingered the locket around my neck.

I loved it; it reminded me of life before the tentacle, before all of the drama of senior year.

May as well try to get some sleep.

I closed my eyes drowsily, but five seconds later, I shot up, knowing I would never get back to sleep.

Now's a good time as ever to memorise and work more on my plans.

I crawled silently over to my desk, grabbing my hair brush on my way there. I looked over my notes and plans as I ran the brush through my hair.

You're probably wondering what my plan is. Or maybe you've already guessed.

I'm going to America to save Lewis.

When I first thought about it, my brain said,

__**'Go, now! Leave and you can get there before he dies! '__**_

But then it said,

_'But what if you die in the process? Lewis wouldn't want the only thing that is precious to him to die just to save him.' __**

>

>And then the in-love-with-Lewis part said,<p>

__**'What about all the up's and down's you've had? What about 'The Charlotte Incident'? What about all you've been through together?' __**_

But then the part that made sense said,

'What would he do if you died? What would Rikki, Emma and Bella do if you died? '

Then I thought rationally, and thought about all of the great times we've had together.

'But you can't! You'll get killed! '

__**'Shut up. We both know love has won this argument.' __**_

And love really did win the argument.

So that's why I'm going to America. It'll take approximately 48 hours to get there if I went non-stop. But I'm going to stop in Hawaii and rest, and I'll get there with no complications. Hopefully.

I'm taking food with me, and money I've saved up. I'm going to leave a note for Rikki, Emma and Bella in a place I'm sure they'll find it and no one else. I just need to plan when I'm going to go.

I think tomorrow night will be best.

But, I want to spend as much time with my friends and family as I can.

Soon, I heard a timid little knock on my door. Then a louder one.

I opened it, to come face to face with Sam.

"Hey, I can't get to sleep, and from the sounds of it, you can't either. Do you want to go downstairs?" She asked with a smile.

"Sure." I smiled back at her. We got halfway down the stairs, when I tripped on a step. Sam grabbed me by the back of my shirt.

"Thanks." I said, relieved. I probably would've woken the whole household if it weren't for her.

"I was doing us both a favour. Nobody wants to be there when someone wakes your father up." We both shuddered at the thought. And then laughed, but quietly.

We got downstairs, and she put the kettle on for some hot-chocolate. I sat down, and she soon sat down next to me.

"So, what was your nightmare about?" She asked.

"Oh, nothing." I murmured quietly.

"You were screaming, Cleo."

"Yeah, I guess I was." I put on evasive action, determined not to answer her question.

"But, I understand if you don't want to talk about it." She added. I let out a small sigh of relief.

"I think I might go back to bed now." I stood up.

"Okay, I hope you don't have any more nightmares." She smiled at me before I retreated up the stairs. Talking to her had actually helped me a bit. She always knew how to make me smile. But sadly for me, I had left without my hot chocolate. And that made me sad.

I opened my bedroom door, walked in, and closed it behind me without a sound. Sam wasn't kidding when she said that nobody wants to be here when someone wakes dad up.

I flopped down on my bed, before my hand shot out to my bedside table, and came back with my phone.

I still want to spend as much time with my friends as possible.

****Rikki, do you want to go for a midnight swim?******

>**~ Cleo**

Ooh, has my little Cleo grown a rebellious streak?**

>**~ Rikki**

Just shut up and meet me at the docks.**

>**~ Cleo**

How do you know I want to go?**

>**~ Rikki**

Are you telling me you don't?**

>**~ Cleo**

...**

>**~ Rikki**

Thought so.**

>**~ Cleo****

>

>I sent a message along the same lines to the others, and we were all gathered at the docks within five minutes.<p>

"Why did you want us here? Do you have something to tell us, Cleo?" Bella asked, eyes gleaming in the dark, filled with curiosity.

"No, no." I bit my lip. I didn't know whether to tell them. I mean, they were my long time friends and they deserved to know, but I don't know how they'd react. Well, I know how Emma would react.

No, Cleo. You've kept it this long, you can keep going.

"Cleo?" Emma's voice snapped me out of my mental argument.

"No, no." I repeated. "Just swimming."

"Okay then. Let's swim." Rikki said before diving into the black water, reflecting the stars and the moon. Soon, we were all in the water, enjoying the cool night's breeze.

"So, shall we get to it?" Rikki asked, looking towards us.

"Mako? Or somewhere different this time?" Bella questioned.

"Mako." I said firmly. I wanted to take a last look at the place, before going off.

"Cleo, are you sure you're alright?" Rikki asked, concerned. And she usually isn't concerned. Great, she picked up something was wrong.

"I'm fine." I said, ducking under the water so I could block out all their voices. I sped to Mako, and I could sense the others were close behind me. I could also tell they were worried. We surfaced at the moon pool, and they all looked at me.

"What?" I asked, rather aggressively.

"Cleo... we know something's wrong." Rikki stated, her mouth in a

firm line.

"Fine! Something's wrong! Okay? Are you happy now?" I admitted.

"Cleo, you can tell us anything." Bella assured me.

"Whatever." I ducked under the water again. But someone grabbed my shoulder. I turned around, and it was Rikki.

I sighed heavily, bubbles coming out of my nose and I returned to the moon pool.

"What was that all about?" Emma asked, hands on hips.

"What was what about?" I asked innocently.

"Cleo, don't play innocent. What's upsetting you?" Bella cut in.

"I can't tell you." I answered simply.

"Can't or won't?" Emma asked, getting frustrated. Because we were never ones to keep secrets from each other.

"Both." I answered.

"Guys..." Rikki warned.

"Whose side are you on?" Emma growled at her.

"I think we should talk about it..." Rikki trailed.

"Oh, so we should talk about Zane?" She flinched when she heard his name.

"Should we talk about how you still love him? We all see you staring, Rikki!" I yelled at her.

What am I doing? I don't yell at my friends!

"I'm sorry." I said quickly.

"No, you're right." Rikki stated.

"No, Rikki. I was out of line. I'm sorry." I apologised again.

"Fine." She said, her mind preoccupied, and I knew she wasn't listening to me.

"What about you, Cleo? You need to tell us!" Emma ordered, turning to me, and away from Rikki, who had started muttering.

"Give me three days." If they gave me that, I would already be out of here, and they'd have a note.

"Three days? Then you'll tell us?" Rikki asked. If anyone was going to agree, it was her; she knew what it was like to keep to yourself.

"No, tell us now." Emma ordered.

"No, Emma. Give her that time. I know how it feels." Rikki put her hand on Emma's shoulder.

"Okay, three days; that's it. Then you have to tell us." She sighed.

"It's a deal." I shook her hand.

"I still can't believe they destroyed this place. It was the only place that was ours." Emma whispered, looking at the ruined cave walls, a tear sliding down her cheek and colliding with the water on her face.

"Now, what should we do?" Rikki asked, knowing we should definitely switch topics. And she would want something to get her mind off what I said about Zane.

"How about we explore Mako?" I suggested. I loved exploring Mako. And who knew how many times I'd get to do it again?

"I'm up for that." Rikki said, looking at me, but then turning to the others, "Are you guys?"

"I'm in." Emma agreed, taking her mind off our ruined moon pool.

"Me too." Bella nodded.

"Then it's settled. Let's get moving." Rikki swam out, us following close behind. We curled around in a semi-circle, and ended up on the shore of Mako, which is where we wanted to be. We pulled ourselves away from the surf, and Rikki took it upon herself to dry us off.

"Okay, there's... that way, that way, or that way." Rikki pointed out random areas of the forest.

"Hmmm, let's see, that way." I said, shrugging and pointing to one of the places she pointed.

"That way it is." Rikki walked into the forest determinedly, me following, Bella following me, and Emma at the back. We needed someone experienced with Mako at the back and someone not like Bella, because she didn't know the place the way we knew it.

"Watch out for the tree, Bella." Rikki called out, as Bella took a near miss with an opposing tree.

"Thanks, Rikki." She replied.

"No problem." Rikki laughed in return.

We kept exploring this way and that, until I heard a scream. As always, it was coming from me.

"Cleo!" Rikki turned around to see me sliding down a hole much like the one at the moon pool. I felt myself thud on the sand.

"Are you okay?" Emma asked.

"I think I've twisted my ankle, but it should be alright." I reassured her. Unfortunately for me, it wasn't that great. It didn't hurt that much, but when you're on a search for your kidnapped boyfriend, you don't want anything holding you down.

"I'm coming down for you!" Rikki called down to me. Soon she was sliding down, a cloud of dirt following her.

"Stay up there to throw a rope down or something." Rikki said in a high, prissy voice, obviously trying to imitate Emma.

"Hey!" Emma exclaimed, sounding offended. Rikki and I laughed and high-fived.

"Still, I really think we should go get some vines or something." Bella suggested, not knowing the history that came with the comment just spoken. Emma groaned. Soon we heard footsteps walking away.

"Hey! I didn't think you were really gonna leave us here!" Rikki protested at our abandonment. They couldn't hear us, and I had a feeling she knew that.

"It's like dÃ©jÃ -vu, isn't it?" She whispered to me.

"I was thinking the same thing." I nodded in agreement.

"Well, are we going to explore this eerily-creepy-exact-replica-of-the-moon-pool or not?" She asked, standing up, for she already knew the answer.

"Definitely." I grinned; I had come a long way from that shy, awkward and cautious girl I used to be.

"Come on then." She took my hand and helped me up. We both looked over, and it had those same uneven rocky steps as the moon pool did.

"This is so creepy." I whispered.

"It's like, exactly the same." She whispered back. We hesitated, before climbing up the steps, Rikki ahead of me.

"It's just a cavern!" She called out, a hint of disappointment lurking in her voice.

"Really?" I asked, bewildered.

"Yeah, I expected a pool of water or something. Come here and see for yourself." She looked at me and motioned for me to come forward. I did, and it was just a cavern. But a cavern with different leads.

"What the heck is going on here!?" Rikki screamed, backing up, so she ended up bumping into me.

"What do you mean?" I asked; to me, it just looked exactly like Rikki had said, a cavern.

"I mean, those paths weren't there before!" She pointed at them and I gasped.

"It was just a dead end, but then it changed." She explained. Soon, we heard a rumble outside.

"What was that? Was that... thunder?" She whispered, looking at me.

Suddenly, the ground started shaking, and we heard a ferocious noise, it sounded like to heavy objects colliding with each other.

"What could that be?" I questioned.

"I don't know, let's find out." She shrugged and walked back in front of me. I soon heard a panicked gasp.

"Cleo!" She shrieked.

"What?" I asked, following her.

She turned to me, her face grave.

>"We're sealed in."<p>

"What!? We can't be!" I gasped. We can't be. I rushed up to the stones and started to pull at them ferociously. We heard a rumble and Rikki pulled my arms and held them behind my back.

"Cleo! What do you think you're doing? If you keep doing that, it could all collapse on us!" She hissed at me. I fell to the ground in despair.

"Cleo? Are you alright?" She asked, kneeling down beside me.

"All my plans, ruined because of rocks. Rocks!" I screamed, tears falling down my face.

"What are you talking about?" She asked, with genuine concern and also that curiosity that she just couldn't restrain.

"I can't do it. All my plans... ruined..." I mumbled. I was in a state of shock, and wasn't up for talking.

"Cleo, tell me. I can get us out if here quicker if you _tell me_." She insisted.

"I can't save him..."

"Save who?" She asked.

"Just leave me alone! Don't you see none of it matters now! We can't get out, I can't save him, and he's probably already dead..." I screamed at her.

"Cleo, we can get out. What about those tunnels?" She put her hand on my shoulder in comfort.

"That's it! The tunnels! Rikki, you're brilliant!" I snapped out of my state of confusion and shock, and motioned for Rikki to lead the way.

"Fine." She sighed deeply, knowing she wouldn't get a single word out of me about my 'plans' now.

"This is what happens when you explore Mako at night." She grumbled, before peeking through and gasped.

"They're not there!" She exclaimed.

"What?" I looked over her shoulder, and sure enough, they weren't there.

"What can we do now?" I asked, refusing to give hope as easily as I did about two minutes ago.

"Wait, how did they appear in the first place?" She asked, looking to me.

"Why are you looking at me? I know as much as you do." I shrugged, averting her gaze.

"Yeah, you- wait! They appeared when you came in!" She shouted in realisation.

"They did?" I asked, clueless.

"Yeah, so what did you do that was so special?" She looked towards me purposefully.

"Maybe I'm just magical." I waved my fingers at her. But I honestly didn't have a clue what I did. We both thought hard on what on earth could have triggered the tunnel activation. After about ten minutes of thinking until our brains exploded, we heard a scuffling noise coming from the rocks that were blocking the exit.

"What was that?" I questioned, turning around.

"Probably just a small animal." Rikki shrugged. We both kept on thinking.

Until we heard voices, that is.

"Rikki! Cleo! Are you alright?" A faint voice called over the debris. A faint voice that sounded like Emma.

"We're fine, just stuck here!" Rikki shouted back.

"Should we get the police, or firemen or something?" Bella called over, she must have accompanied Emma back to find that the hole had been caved in.

"NO!" Rikki and I screamed in unison. The cave was magical, we knew that for sure. What non-magical cave can randomly make tunnels appear and disappear?

"Uh, okay!" She replied back.

"We think we might have a way out!" Rikki called to them.

"We're going to check it out! You go do something else!" Rikki

grinned. We couldn't see her, but we knew Emma was rolling her eyes and stomping away, Bella following behind her.

"Okay." Rikki leant in the wall and resumed thinking about what we could have possibly done.

We continued this for five more minutes, until I yelled out.

"I've got it!" I cried, and Rikki's face was screaming _tell me_.

"It wasn't what I said, it was what _you _said." I said, pointing to her.

"What?" Her eyes widened with disbelief.

"It's true. I know what you said."

"Well, tell me! Or do you want to be stuck here forever?" She screamed, but she looked as if she were about to start jumping up and down at any moment.

I leant over and whispered it in her ear. Her eyes widened again, but this time, in realisation of truth.

"Pool of water." She spoke clearly, and two very long tunnels appeared.

"Yes!" We both shouted in triumph.

"Uh, now the question is... which one should we go through?" She asked, looking at me for an answer.

"Ummmm..."

Rikki just let out a loud huff.

"Eeniee, meenie, minie, mo, catch a mermaid by the fin, if she burns you, let her go, eeniee, meenie, minie, mo." She ended up pointing to the right tunnel.

"You know, that doesn't even rhyme. And it's about you, instead of about mermaids in general." I crossed my arms over my chest and glared at her.

"I know, it's brilliant, isn't it." She grinned. "Now, come on!" She tugged at my arm and led me into the haunting darkness of the left tunnel.

"But we were supposed to go into the right one!" I argued against her twisted logic.

"That's not the way my version goes." I could see her smile, even though it was pitch black.

"How long is this going to take?" I asked, as if she would have any clue.

"How am I supposed to know?"

"You're not. I just thought you could throw a little light on the situation."

"Unless I light fire to everything, I don't see how I can do that."

"It's a metaphor! I still wonder how you passed high school." I groaned.

"Nah, you know you love me." She grinned. Well, I couldn't see it, but I knew it was there. After that, we stayed silent; the only sound we could hear was our footsteps.

"Look, there's light!" I shrieked.

"Come on!" Rikki tugged on my arm again and led me through the shining thing that I thought was light.

"What is this?" I asked, looking around. All I could see was white.

"Maybe it- Ahhh!" She screamed as she fell down something. Finally, she was the one to slip up, not me. I slid gracefully after her.

"What was that?" She grumbled, rubbing her ankle.

"I'd say you just fell down a hole." I laughed.

"Uh huh."

"But I might have an idea of what that cave-thingy was." I replied, trying to hide traces of laughter that were still lingering on my face.

"Well, what was it?" She asked.

"Back before Bella came, me and Lewis..." My voice trembled when I said his name.

"What's wrong?" She asked.

"Nothing. We were doing this project on caves, and we found one that looks completely white. But in reality, it just has pure white walls and has dangerous holes that can lead to treacherous places. No one knew much about it. And people who have been in what they thought was it, say it felt magical." I explained, while she actually sat there and listened.

"That sounds about right." Rikki agreed.

"But I'm pretty sure that this isn't just any dangerous hole." I said, and it's true.

"Why?"

"Because no matter where we go, a pool of water has to be somewhere at the end of this. How else do you explain the tunnels appearing when you said it, unless they led to water?" I asked, putting my hands on my hips.

"I guess so." She shrugged and I helped her up.

"Let's get moving." I looked around, and in the bleak darkness, I saw that there was yet another tunnel. I tugged on her hand, trying to motivate her. Because honestly, we had both had enough of this charade.

"Okay..." Rikki complied with my insistence. We walked through the tunnel, watching our step, because it was getting darker by the second and we had to hold onto each other's hands or else we would probably lose one another in the pitch black darkness.

(A/N: **And I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, '_Why can't Rikki just light up the walls with her power?_' It's because her power is the hardest to control and if she just lit a spark, who knows what it could do?**)

"How long have we been down here? Emma and Bella must be worried." Rikki stated, and we both imagined the panic Emma must be going through with her two best friends trapped underground.

"Probably a few hours." I answered simply.

"Ugh." She groaned.

"More light." I pointed out.

"Ooh!" She gave a little squeal and started tugging me towards it.

"Okay, what is this- Ahhh!" I screamed as if I fell down a hole. It seemed as though fate was making us take turns.

SPLASH!

"Ooh, water!" Rikki slid in after me, hearing the splash. She soon fell in as well and saw me with my bright orange tail. Ten seconds later she had one too.

"Let's see if this leads anywhere." She ducked under, and I copied her. It seemed there was a hole, and it was just big enough for us to fit through if we went one at a time. I squeezed through, and Rikki went through after me.

We looked around, and it seemed we were in yet _another_ tunnel. But this time it was underwater, and I had a feeling it would lead somewhere other than holes.

We rapidly swam down in single file.

I soon bumped into something. I signalled for Rikki to stop, and I felt a wall in front of me. I ran my fingers across it, and found cracks across it, as if it were made out of single rocks tightly woven together. I pulled some rocks away, then more, and more, until the whole thing fell and it was big enough for me to fit through. And Rikki, of course. I got myself through, and motioned for Rikki to resume following me.

We continued swimming, and I soon bumped into something else. Another

rock wall. Hmmm. I pulled it apart as I did the last one, and continued on my way.

I swam a little bit more cautiously this time, and saw a shadow before me. Yet another rock wall. But this one was different. It was completely solid, like a cavern wall, instead of a makeshift wall made up of tightly held rocks. I tried pushing at it, and it didn't cave in. That was when I noticed the lighter water above me, which was in contrast to the deep blue water we had been swimming in.

Wait, pale water meant that there was a way out. I darted around and pointed up. Rikki got the message.

There was indeed an air pocket above us, and we were soon taking deep gulps of air, even though we truly didn't need it.

"So, going back down now?" She smiled at me.

"Yep. I think our adventure is coming to a close." I grinned back at her.

"Aww, but I really liked exploring dank, dark, creepy underground tunnels." She pouted playfully.

"Sounds like you." I ducked under again before she could respond. I traced around the cave, to find it was somewhat circular.

As I was going around, I found that there was an opening. I pointed upward to Rikki, and we both got to the air pocket.

"There's an opening, I think it's big enough to fit through, so we should be good."

She nodded and ducked under and I followed. I managed to barely get myself through the hole, the rock scraping against my tail slightly. It hurt a little bit, but I wanted to get out of here so I didn't really care.

I got out and gasped in relief, bubbles coming out of my mouth doing so. I looked down to my tail, to see if it had suffered any damage. It looked alright.

I looked over to the opening and saw Rikki trying to get out, and decided to help her a little bit. I seized her arms and pulled, her tail finally becoming free.

Now, onto the matter that was plaguing my brain.

Where in the world are we?

I pointed upwards after Rikki had finished examining her tail.

"Yeah?" She asked, after her blond head popped up from the water.

"Do you know where we are?" I questioned.

"I never thought about it..." She trailed and began looking around.

Luckily, in the darkness of night, we saw a certain Mako Island in the distance.

"Well, that's settled. Now, I want to do some swimming. _Relaxing _swimming." She ducked under the water, knowing I silently agreed.

Rikki speed-swam, while I swam in loops and looked at colourful fish while tracing my hand across beautiful coral. It really was relaxing. I mentally sighed with satisfaction. But, maybe we should be getting back. They must be pretty worried.

Where is that girl?

Ah, there she is. I saw Rikki spiralling in the water about twenty metres away. I speed-swam to her, bubbles enveloping my body as I smiled. When I got to her, I pointed up and she nodded.

"Yes, Cleo?" She asked with a content smile on her face.

"I think we should be heading back. They must be worried." I answered. After having thought about it for a minute, Rikki said,

"Okay."

"Good." I replied. We both looked to the right and we could see Mako in the distance.

"It should take us about ten to fifteen minutes to get there if we speed-swim." Rikki explained. I just nodded simply and we both headed in the direction of our familiar island. We soon got there, and were greeted by the sight of Bella and Emma sitting in the beach looking lonely. Rikki managed to discreetly dry us before they noticed.

"Honey, I'm home!" Rikki joked, running up to them.

"Rikki! Cleo!" Emma dashed to us, and enveloped us in hugs.

"Where were you?" She asked when we pulled away.

Nothing like a good adventure with your best friends before leaving them, not knowing if you'll ever return.

* * *

><p>Sooo, did you like it? I hope you did. Please review, you don't know how much it means to me. You guys are awesome!

3. Chapter 3

Kidnapped Love

Chapter Three

**Hi guys! Just saying, this chapter was WAY too long! Don't be expecting many more like it, sorry. It's long because I knew that if

Cleo didn't leave in this chapter, it would be weird. And another thing, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S ALMOST CHRISTMAS! Merry Christmas you guys! That is if I don't upload nearer to Christmas than this, but I'm hoping to upload before kids run down the stairs screaming 'IT'S TIME TO OPEN PRESENTS! '**

* * *

><p>The day started off like normal. I walked downstairs to be greeted by:<p>

"You look awful, Cleo." Kim snickered.

"Thanks for the compliment my darling angel of a sister." I rolled my eyes and continued my way down the stairs.

"Good morning, Cleo." Dad looked up from his morning paper to smile at me.

"Morning, dad." I smiled back.

"Cleo, do you want some breakfast?" Sam called from the kitchen.

"I'm fine." I replied.

"Come on, you have to eat something." She poked her head round the wall.

"Fine. I'll make myself some toast. Kim, do you want some?" I asked, as I always do because I try to be the nicer sister.

"Sure. If it was anybody else. I don't want you touchi-"

"I'll take care of Little Miss all-too-pleased-with-herself." Sam interrupted and threw a brief glare in Kim's direction. Which the annoying girl pretended she didn't see.

"It was very nice of you to offer to make us all breakfast, darling." My father's comment was intended for Sam. I guess she had done that before I came down. I placed my bread in the toaster and pushed down the dial.

"I'm going to get dressed. Please don't let my toast burn." I looked at Sam as I said that last part, and she nodded. I walked up the stairs again, up to my room, and closed the door. But something was going to speed up my plans ahead of schedule. Books can do that to you. I opened up my closet draws and looked at the sea of blues, pinks, purples, and various other colours that I enjoyed. Now that I think about it, my choice of clothes reflected my mermaid powers. Huh. I picked out a casual top that started out as light blue but then descended into navy blue with a diagonal slant, and some fairly normal denim shorts.

As I was getting dressed, I accidentally bumped into the side of my fish tank, effectively making a few droplets of water slosh out of it and land on me. I let out a little scream as I fell down, golden tail behind me.

When I fell, my tail bumped into my bookcase which sent a book

tumbling down and caused the sharp corner to collide with my tail and cause me pain. Then I grabbed the towel I always hid under the bed in case things like this happened, and dried myself off.

I soon got my legs back and finished getting dressed. I was about to go back downstairs; when I realised I hadn't picked the book up off the floor. I bent over to pick it up and immediately recognised it. So, instead of putting it back like I intended, I sat on my bed and started flipping through the pages.

Ooh, that was when Lewis and I were in the caf   when Rikki blew up the wish potion,

Ooh, that's when he gave me his jacket after he insisted he only gave it to Charlotte because she asked him to,

Ooh, that's us on Valentine's Day,

That's us at the prom,

That's when he was about to leave for America,

That's us at Graduation,

That's us at the moon pool,

That's when we swam together,

That's us testing the tentacle water,

That's us at the pier,

That's us at Mako,

That's us at school, with the mermaid mythology book...

Wait, who took these pictures again? Oh, I forget.

I snapped the book closed and put it back on the shelf. Whenever I see his face in a picture or hear his name, it's like fuel to the fire. So that's what rescheduled my plans for 1:45. But it was morning, not even close to when I was leaving, so I decided to make the most of my time here. I rushed downstairs, hoping not to see a cloud of black smoke rising from the toaster. And you know what? I didn't. Instead I saw Sam holding out a plate with two pieces of toast on it.

"The first ones burned, but I made some more." She handed it to me.

"Thanks." I sat down at the table, in the seat next to my father.

"How are you today, Cleo?" Dad asked.

"I'm alright." Which was a total lie.

"Any sleeping problems or anything?" He asks that because my alarm clock 'malfunctions' which is actually Kim tampering with the time. But he doesn't know that. He's still living in denial-land where Kim

is a sweet little angel. Or he asks that because I sometimes have nightmares. Like lately. Because Kim hasn't bothered to fiddle with my alarm clock because,
>a.) I hid it,
b.) I don't go to college yet so it doesn't really matter.

"No, I'm fine." I exchanged a knowing glance with Sam before taking a bite out of my toast. My mind started to wander and I thought of Lewis and the album that I'd looked at.

"Cleo, are you okay?" Dad asked with a concerned look on his face.

"What?" I responded. Kim then said some snarky comment that I paid no attention to.

"You're crying." Sam added, worry traced all over her face.

"Please excuse me." I pushed away from the table and dashed to the bathroom. I looked in the mirror, and sure enough there were tears trailing down my face. I put my hand up to my cheek, as if the mirror could be deceiving me.

I was definitely crying.

I wiped my tears away, grateful that they don't make me transform. I walked out of the bathroom and resumed my place with my family at the table.

"Finally, the little baby managed to cover up her tears." Kim muttered under her breath, so I could hear it, but my father couldn't. I stared at the watch on my wrist and it displayed 8:27. Pretty early.

"Do you mind if I go spend some time with my friends today, dad?" I asked, looking down at my plate and realising that I wasn't hungry anymore.

"Sure thing, darling." He said, still absorbed in the newspaper.

"Thanks." I got up and kissed him on his forehead before going into the bathroom again. I picked up the brush and ran it through my hair. Then I exited the bathroom and went out the front door. I wondered what to do. I couldn't go to Emma's or anything, it's too early. Hmmm. Oh well, I'll just call Rikki. She can be grumpy if she wants to.

I dialled Rikki's number, and waited for her to pick up.

"Hmm, wha? Cleo, you woke me up!" She whined.

"I guess I did. What do you want to do today?" I asked.

"Sleep." She grumbled, and I could hear her flopping back down into her pillows.

"Rikki, do you still have the phone pressed to your ear?" I asked.

"Yeah, why?"

"WAKE UP!"

"Ahh!" I could hear a thump on the ground, and I could tell she'd fallen off her bed. I heard a shuffling noise, and then,

"Okay, I'm up."

"Good. My plan worked." I smiled.

"What plan? You screamed at me!"

"It worked, didn't it?"

"Whatever." She grumbled.

"So, what do you want to do today?" I repeated.

"I don't know, I have a lot of spare time on my hands." She sighed. The café, ever since she had left, she found herself having more time than she wanted, and school being over just made the problem worse.

"How about you meet me at the Marine Park in fifteen minutes?" I suggested.

"It'll probably end up being twenty-five, but okay." She hung up. Then I dialled Emma's number.

"Hi Cleo! How are you this fine morning?" She greeted me cheerfully.

"You sound awfully happy. What's up?" I asked.

"Stuff."

"What kind of stuff?"

"I'm just happy the sun is shining, the sea is blue, and my wonderfully awesome boyfriend JUST GOT ME A HORSE!" She squealed.

"What?"

"He got me a horse! He got me a horse!" She shrieked with delight.

"Oh my gosh, he got you a horse!?" I screamed, her infectious mood rubbing off on me.

"Yep, she's called Snowflake! She's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen!"

"That's so cute! Did he name it because of your powers?" I asked, saying the word 'powers' quietly.

"Yeah, he came up with the name and we both agreed on it! Do you want to see her?" She asked.

"Well, I was actually wondering if you could meet me at the Marine Park in thirty minutes." I wanted her to come a little later, just in case Rikki ended up being late, which was almost definite.

"Sure, but you guys have to come see her today!" She hung up. I dialled Bella's number and waited for her to pick up.

"Hiya Cleo!" She said happily.

"So I didn't wake you?" I asked.

"Uh, Cleo, it's 8:45. Of course I'm awake." I was surprised at how much time had passed.

"Not in Rikki-land." I replied and we both laughed.

"How is Rikki?" She asked, assuming that I had phoned Rikki before her.

"Probably making up some excuse not to leave her bed until midday."

"Sounds like Rikki." Bella replied with a light laugh.

"Where are you?" I asked.

"Will's boat shed." She answered.

"I see."

"What do you mean?" She questioned.

"Oh, nothing."

"Are you implying that I spend too much time with Will? Because if you are-"

"Relax, Bella. I'm just trying to wind you up." I laughed at her.

"Oh."

"So, what have you done today?" I asked.

"Let's see, I've slept, eaten breakfast, taken a five minute swim-"

"Five minute swim!? As Rikki would say- that's way too short of a swim for a mermaid!" I exclaimed.

"Every swim is too short for her."

"You do have a point there." I replied.

"And then I went over to Will's and we've been there since you called me." She finished the sentence that I oh-so_rudely_interrupted.

"What have you been doing there?"

"Do you need to know every single aspect of my day?" She huffed playfully.

"Why yes, I feel it is my duty to check up on my friends and their boyfriends." I said, in a mock-authority voice.

"Uh huh. And what have you been doing today?" She asked.

"Talking to you." I shrugged.

"More info please."

"Okay, I got up, had Kim insult me--"

"That little--"

"Yes, I know, I know. Then I put toast on, got dressed, got splashed, found out that my toast had burned, but my lovely step-mother made some more for me, then I realised I wasn't hungry and went outside to call my best friends. That's about it."

"Very very precise and detailed. Well done, Cleo. Gold star." She laughed.

"Ooh, I love gold stars!" I squealed childishly.

"Are you talking to Cleo?" I heard in the background.

"Yeah, it's Cleo." Bella replied to her boyfriend, who I could only assume was behind her somewhere.

"Hi Cleo!" He called to me.

"Hiya Will!" I called back.

"Okay, back to regular talking now!" Bella's voice came through the speaker again.

"Fine then. Get your ears ready for what I have to ask you."

"Which is?" She asked, curious.

"Could you meet Emma, Rikki and I at the Marine Park in twenty-five minutes?" I asked, since about five minutes had passed since I told Emma to be there in thirty.

"Sure thing. Bye Cleo."

"Bye Bella." I hung up. I decided to wander around the town a little bit, even if I knew it like the back of my hand. That's such a weird expression. What if you get a new cut on your hand? That then defeats the whole meaning of it. I decided to go say hi to Ronnie. I entered the Marine Park gates, said a quick hello to Laurie, and got to where Ronnie was usually kept.

"Hey Ronnie. Who's a good boy?" I asked, speaking in baby talk more for my amusement than his own. He spoke a series of clicks before sliding in a line, effectively spraying water all over me.

Help!

I took a quick look around, and after checking nobody was there, dove into the water.

"Ronnie, I wanted to say hi, not get splashed!" I exclaimed in frustration. He just clicked at me. Great. What am I going to do? There's no way out. People come past all the time. I'm done for.

Extremely luckily for me, my phone fell out of my pocket as I had dove into the water. I reached up to grab it when,

"Cleo?"

Oh no. Laurie.

"Cleo, are you okay?" I heard footsteps coming closer.

"I'm fine!" I managed to get out a struggled cry.

"I heard a splash! Did you fall in?" The footsteps were faster, he was running.

"I'm fine, stay there!" I warned him.

"Why?" He stopped.

"Because... uh, because..." I searched for some excuse.
>"Uh, because..." I still couldn't find a reason. I sighed heavily, hating to have to resort to this. I twisted my hand and sent a gust of wind in his direction. While he was distracted, I quickly grabbed my cellphone and hid under the wooden platform people walk on of they come to see Ronnie.<p>

I quickly texted Rikki.

****Help me!*****
>****~ Cleo****

"Cleo?" Laurie walked up on the platform, and I could see his shadow cast on the water.

"I could have sworn she was here a second ago." He said, confused.

"Where's Cleo, boy?" Laurie asked Ronnie. I motioned for Ronnie to be quiet. He clicked.

"Shhh, please!" I said in a whisper.

****Where are you?*****
>****~ Rikki****

****Ronnie's pool. Laurie is here. Please help.*****
>****~ Cleo******
>

>I hugged the phone to my chest, silently wishing Rikki to be here soon. Soon I heard another pair of footsteps.<p>

"Hey Laurie." Rikki greeted the man casually.

"Hi Rikki." He replied.

"So, how is Ronnie?" She asked. I took this as my cue to get out of there. I gently swam away from the platform, careful not to make a sound, and to go with the edges of the pool. I got around, pulled myself up onto the concrete and Rikki hid her hand behind her back, balling it into a fist. She slowly steam-dried me as to not raise suspicion. When I got my legs I quickly ran over to Rikki.

"How did you-" He got cut off.

"Well, we've got to go, bye Laurie." I placed my hands on Rikki's shoulders and carted her away.

"Thanks for all your help!" Rikki called to him as we left, leaving him standing there, stunned. Rikki and I walked to the place where we were all supposed to meet.

"Cleo, are you okay? Did he see anything?" She asked frantically, while Bella asked things along the same lines.

"I'm fine. Rikki got me out before he saw anything." I shrugged, looking over to her.

"That's a relief." Bella stated, and we all silently agreed.

"So, what do you want to do today?" Rikki questioned.

"We have to go see Snowflake!" Emma squealed.

"Snowflake?" Bella and Rikki asked in unison and looked at Emma as if she were crazy.

"Ash got me a horse!" Emma bounced slightly.

"Really?" Rikki said in disbelief.

"Yep." She said, barely able to contain her excitement. Then she nattered on about it and I tuned it out, as I had heard all of this in our phone call. And before I knew it, Bella was snapping her fingers in front of my face.

"Cleo?"

"What?" I looked up at her.

"What did _you _want to do today?" Rikki asked.

"Well, I thought maybe we could go swimming?"

"That sounds good." Bella nodded.

"Sure." Emma stated her answer.

"I'd love to." Rikki smiled. So we all walked down to Lewis' Secret Fishing Spot, and I tried to hide my sadness as I remembered all the times he and I had shared here. Rikki and Emma dove into the water, Bella and I following close behind. I felt myself transform, and I

soon saw Rikki racing off in a flurry of bubbles. I followed her, and she noticed that I was next to her and smiled. We swam in loops, twirls, and backwards against each other. Then I felt something sharp hit my head, which I assumed was Rikki banging into me. But it was a rock.

Ow!

I winced and pulled my head away. Rikki rushed over to me, and helped me get to the surface.

"Cleo, are you okay?" She asked. Bella and Emma noticed the commotion and swam up.

"What's going on?" Bella asked.

"Cleo hit her head on a rock. Hard." Rikki explained, while I kept pressure on the back of my head. It hurt a lot, but I hoped it wasn't too serious.

"Can we do anything?" Emma asked, face displaying concern.

"I'm fine, guys. But could we just stop swimming?" I asked.

"_Stop swimming?_ How could Rikki ever _stop swimming?_" Emma laughed while Rikki shot her an icy glare.

"Come on, let's get back to the beach." Rikki towed me away forcefully, and I could tell that she was more worried over trying to prove a point to Emma than over my welfare. As Rikki assisted me gently (dragged me roughly) up the sand of the beach, I moaned and fidgeted out of her grip.

"Remind me never to bump my head again." I groaned, throwing my head back on the sand. Which actually hurt, because that's where I had bumped it.

"Ow!" I rubbed the back of my now even more painful head.

"So, what do you want to do now?" Rikki asked, fiddling with a strand of her wet hair.

"I'm surprised you don't know." Emma rolled her eyes in Rikki's direction.

"What?" Rikki looked toward her lazily.

"DRY US!"

"Oh, right." Rikki stuck out her hand and balled it into a fist. When we got our legs back, we all hopped up in unison.

"How's your head?" Bella asked me absentmindedly.

"Bella," I walked over to her and smiled. "I'm fine. But thanks for asking."

"Good."

"Soooo, what do we do now?" Rikki asked, tucking a strand of hair

behind her ear.

"Uhhh, what's there to do?" Bella asked. And thinking about it, there actually wasn't much to do. We had already discussed what happened yesterday with me and Rikki, we just went swimming, we have no homework, and we couldn't just waltz into the café (much to Zane's delight) and get a juice because Rikki and Zane weren't together anymore.

"Well, there was something I wanted to tell you guys." I muttered.

"What did you want to tell us?" Rikki turned to me, curious.

"What's bothering you, Cleo?" Bella questioned, face full of concern.

"Please tell us what's going on. We don't keep secrets." Emma pleaded.

"No, it's not that." I mumbled.

"Oh." Emma said simply, but she looked disappointed. It killed me that I had to keep it a secret. But it wouldn't be a secret for much longer.

"So, what did you want to tell us?" Bella asked, cutting the tension.

"Well..." I trailed.

"Come on." Rikki urged.

"Do you guys know how much you mean to me?" I blurted it out.

"We are pretty awesome." Rikki laughed.

"Rikki! Cleo is trying to talk." Emma scolded her.

"I just want to say that I love you guys and I wouldn't ever do anything to hurt you." I said, tears starting to fall down my cheeks.

"You know that, right?"

"Cleo, of course we do." Bella enveloped me in a hug while I sniffled.

"I just love you guys so much; you're the best friends I could have ever asked for." I smiled once Bella pulled away.

"Oh Cleo." Emma smiled empathetically and we all went in for a group hug.

"I'll miss you all so much." I whispered so no one could hear.

We pulled away and the whole group smiled at me.

"Do you guys want to go get some lunch? Cleo's pick." Rikki offered.

"Is it that time already?" I asked, surprised as I wiped my tears away.

"Yeah, it's 1:27." Rikki shrugged.

"Shoot." I muttered under my breath.

"What's wrong, Cleo?" Bella asked, looking at me.

"Oh, I just remembered somewhere I have to be, that's all." I lied. Well, it wasn't really a lie, more of a half-truth.

"When do you have to be there?" Emma questioned.

"1:45. I have time to have lunch with you guys." I answered quickly.

"So, what do you want to have for lunch, Cleo?" Bella asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Rikki can pick." I waved it off.

"Oh no, you're not getting off that easily!" Bella took a step towards me.

"I think you'll find that I am!" I took a step away from her.

"No way!" She chased after me.

"Bet you can't catch me!" I taunted and stuck my tongue out at her.

"Bet I can!" She pounced on me.

"Got you!" She started tickling me.

"Ahhh, no! Bella, stop! Please, have mercy!" I begged, sputtering with giggles.

"Not until you answer the question!" She continued tickling me.

"What was the question again?"

"What do you want to have for lunch?" Rikki spoke up from behind, having watched the whole escapade.

"Uhhh, I don't know, but make her stop tickling me!" I gasped.

"Bella! Cease and desist."

Bella hopped off me. I stood up and brushed the sand off myself.

"We could have... I'm not very hungry?"

"Uh huh, wonderful suggestion, Cleo. I'm sure it's delicious." Rikki crossed her arms over her chest, unimpressed.

"Uh... just let Rikki pick!" I whined.

"Fine. Rikki, you pick." Emma sighed.

"Um..." Rikki bit her lip.

"Here we go again..."

* * *

><p>"Uhh..."<p>

By this time, Bella and I were leaning on Emma's shoulders, eyelids drooping.

"Rikki, pick something! These two are ready to fall asleep." She ushered.

"Fine, let's just go to the food court and pick our own." Rikki huffed.

"Brilliant! Bella? Cleo?"

"What? What's happening?" Our heads snapped up, effectively banging into Emma's in the process.

"Ow!" She winced.

"This is what happens when someone tries to pick lunch." Bella moaned.

"I never want to have lunch again." Emma groaned, rubbing the fantasy bump on her head.

"Ugh, let's just hurry up and get to the food court." Rikki grabbed Emma by the sleeve and pulled her away. Bella and I exchanged amused looks before running after them.

"Hey, wait up!" I shouted as I caught up to speed with them. Rikki was still dragging Emma, a look of determination set on her face.

"Bella, what are you going to have for lunch?" I asked, looking over to the girl who was on the other side of Emma. Sand morphed into concrete as we exited the beach.

"Um, I'm not sure." She shrugged. "Something healthy."

"You and your stupid diets! Deep fried chips and hamburgers for all!" Rikki cheered.

"They're not stupid! I just like to keep my figure." Bella defended herself.

"Bella, we are _mermaids, _as long as we swim, we'll stay fit." Emma spoke as a voice of reason.

"She does have a point." I nodded and agreed with Emma.

"Yeah, you don't want to end up like those anorexic blond girls stuck in tight dresses like in the magazines." Rikki shuddered at the

thought.

"Okay- changed my mind. McDonalds for me." Bella said rather quickly.

"Whoopee!" Rikki shouted. "What is up with those magazine girls, anyway?" She continued. "They're like, ooh, I have this totally gorgeous pink skirt that was on sale at the mall!" She imitated a posh girly voice. "Memo to those girls: WE DON'T CARE!"

"When you said that, two words came to mind." Emma laughed.

"Which were?" Rikki asked with curiosity.

"Miriam Kent."

Rikki, Emma and I burst out laughing. Unfortunately for poor Bella, she didn't have a clue who Miriam was.

"Who's Miriam? Whoever she is, she doesn't sound good." She asked with a quizzical look on her face.

"You're right on the dot with that one, Bella." Rikki let out a light and airy laugh.

"Miriam was this girl who had an _obvious _problem with us. She kept trying to sabotage us; even going to the lengths of trying to sneakily outdo Cleo in the Queen of the Sea Pageant, after she found out what she thought was Cleo's costume." Emma explained.

"Wait, Cleo entered the Queen of the Sea Pageant?" Bella sputtered in disbelief.

"Uh, yeah, hehe." I backed away, silently praying for neither Rikki nor Emma to say anything.

"Yeah, she was totally great. And the only one who didn't get wet!" Rikki exclaimed. I groaned.

"Wait a second. Cleo entered a Queen of the Sea Pageant, there was water involved, and you haven't _told_me?" She accused, but was mostly fascinated by the whole story.

"Uhhh, must have slipped our minds." I said nervously and turned to run.

"Don't even think about it, Cleo." Rikki warned. I sighed and turned back to face them fully.

"So, tell me. What happened?" Bella asked, enthralled.

"Well, Miriam was being snobby as she always was, and said some remark about how she was going to win the pageant and for Cleo not to bother entering. So that got her mad and she ent-" Rikki started.

"She also stole Rikki's locket!" I shouted, trying desperately to draw the attention away from me.

"She _what?_" Bella nearly screamed.

"Well, you know Zane and I were dating before you came," Rikki winced as she said his name, because Zane had become a painful subject for her to discuss and brought up memories she wanted to forget. "This was before he knew the secret, and Miriam had this fantasy that Zane and her were dating, and as Zane and I were walking through the mall one day, we saw the locket in a store. I was so absorbed in it, and Zane seemed to notice it was special to me, and planned to buy it for me. But Miriam saw this and bought it to spite me. Then she agreed that she'd 'part' with the locket if Zane gave her a kiss. But what Zane didn't know, is that I had just walked in and was behind them."

"Go on." Bella ushered, eyes sparkling.

"So Zane kissed her, and then we both found out that Miriam's way of 'parting' with the locket was actually throwing it into the canal. That was when Emma's secret was nearly exposed, because she dove after it, but then Zane did the same." Rikki said further.

"But wouldn't you get wet by touching it?" Bella questioned.

"She let it slip through her fingers and dried it before she picked it up again." I explained.

"Oh." Bella said, nodding in new-found understanding.

"Enough about Zane, don't we have lunch to eat?" Rikki was eager to switch topics.

"Yes, we do." Emma smiled with a hint of '_I'm sorry_'; because she knew we shouldn't have focused on Zane as long as we had, even if it wasn't directly. Bella looked around beneath her and realised we had stopped walking while telling these specific tales. We stopped talking about Miriam, because if you had Miriam, there would always be a little mention of Zane in some form.

"Let's get going." Rikki said absentmindedly, eyeing a female jogger with a dripping water bottle. I don't think anybody but me saw, but she discreetly scrunched up her hand and a very small waft of steam flew up from the bottle before it stopped dripping completely. Four sets of footsteps started up on the pavement again as we continued.

"So, how's everything been?" Emma asked. She always asked that, even if it had only been the previous day since she had said it.

"I told Will about our little adventure on Mako." Bella answered.

"Little?" Rikki snorted. "You try being trapped underground and see if you call it little."

"How's your ankle?" Bella asked, looking over to me.

"It's alright." I answered, surprised because I had actually forgotten all about it.

"And your head?" She added.

"It hurts a little bit." I said truthfully, because I knew if I didn't answer honestly I would be in trouble.

"Talk about accident prone." Rikki laughed. I just rolled my eyes at her.

"We're here." Bella announced.

"Where?" I asked, having forgotten the meaning of this journey.

"The mall, silly." Bella smiled.

"Come on, I'm hungry." Rikki moaned, and to my surprise, which was displayed very openly on my face, she pulled me in.

"Rikki!" I protested. She just ignored me and kept going. She found the food court and we all took a seat.

* * *

><p>Later...

Bella ended up with lettuce strewn through her hair, Emma and Rikki had rushed to the bathroom because, Rikki had ended up with hot sauce splattered over her face, and when Emma laughed at her, Rikki took the bottle and dumped its contents over her head. And me, I had come out of the situation clean, and red in the face from laughing so hard.

"Should they be taking this long?" Bella asked, looking towards me with a worried look on her face. Then, we both heard a rather loud and startling noise and our heads looked to the right to see a blond girl running away- from what looked like the bathrooms- screaming.

"That was weird. And I'm sure they're fine." I paused. "But it wouldn't hurt to check."

"Let's go." She went to get up, but I stopped her.

"Let's get this lettuce out of your hair first." I leant over and picked the various leaves out of her hair.

"Come on." She pushed me away gently and got up. I did the same, and we made our way over to the public bathrooms, where shouting could be heard from inside. We pushed the door open, to reveal Rikki and Emma arguing heatedly.

"Guys? Everything alright?" Bella asked slightly nervously, for she knew how bad it could get when Emma and Rikki fought.

"Oh, everything's fine, except we nearly got exposed!" Emma said sarcastically, throwing a glare in Rikki's direction.

"That wasn't my fault!" Rikki cried in her defence.

"Oh yeah, it wasn't anybody's fault, was it?"

"You are impossible!" Rikki screamed, flinging her arms out, looking as if she were very tempted to hit Emma.

"Calm down, guys. Just tell us exactly what happened." I put each of my hands on one of their shoulders and led them out of the bathrooms and to where we Bella and I had been sitting previously.

"Fine, we'll tell you what happened." Emma crossed her arms over her chest and turned to me.

Flashback

Rikki and Emma burst through the doors.

"I can't believe you poured hot sauce on my head!" Emma pouted.

"At least it didn't contain water." Rikki shrugged.

"What kind of hot sauce has water in it?" Emma raised her eyebrows in amusement.

"I don't know!" Rikki sputtered and started laughing. After they stopped laughing, Rikki spoke up.

"Okay, how are we going to do this?" She looked at her friend, putting her hands on her hips.

"Hmmm. We could get Cleo to make a square or water- kind of like a sponge- and then get Bella to jellyify it so we can scrub our faces without transforming. Sort of." Emma answered.

"You always have a plan, don't you?" Rikki rolled her eyes.

"Whatever. You get the water running while I get Bella and Cleo." She turned to open the door, waiting to see if Rikki would do what she said before leaving. Rikki turned the tap on, and a huge spray of water splashed them both in face, surprise written all over their faces. Emma pulled Rikki into the cubicle before they transformed.

"Stupid defective tap." Rikki groaned as she fell down, her golden tail poking out of the space at the bottom of the stall.

"_Ow!_" Emma cried as her shoulders collided with Rikki's.

"Ugh, now we just-"

"Could you move a little-"

They both tried to get the other to listen as they shifted uncomfortably small claustrophobic space.

"Okay!" Rikki shouted, which made Emma stop squirming and listen.

"Someone could come in at any time." She continued. "So we need to get into a better position so I can dry us off."

"Why can't you dry us off now?" Emma asked.

"Because-" She was cut off by Emma hastily putting her hand over

Rikki's mouth, and she did that, because she heard footsteps. Whoever the person was, they obviously turned the tap on, because soon the two mermaids heard:

"Ugh!" And what sounded like bracelets clanging together, which must have been a girl most likely shaking her hands to rid them of water. The girl must have turned around, because they heard:

"A golden dolphin tail?"

Rikki was about to speak out- they were _mermaids_- not dolphins. But instead of protesting, because she knew how utterly stupid it would be, she just dried Emma and herself, leaving legs in place of a tail.

"What is going on here?" The girl screamed.

"Oh great." Rikki muttered. She leant over, and then remembered she didn't need to, because she was so tightly jammed next to her friend, and whispered in Emma's ear.

"I think we need to scare her off." She whispered. After thinking about it, and realising they didn't really have any other choice, (because they couldn't just go out and say 'Hey! We're mermaids, deal with it.') Emma raised her hand in a stop position, and made ice creep up the mirror.

They could hear the girl turning around. "What the heck?"

Rikki balled her hand into a fist, melting squares in the ice.

"Uhhh." They heard the girl shuffling to the back of the room. Emma froze the entire mirror, and Rikki melted a message onto it.

GET OUT

And that was the point that she ran out screaming.

End of Flashback

"We saw that girl!" Bella exclaimed, her eyes lighting up with recognition.

"You did?" Emma asked in surprise.

"Yeah, ran away from the bathroom screaming." She replied.

"Funny." Rikki said sounding very unamused.

"So why exactly were you fighting?" I asked, knowing that they didn't actually need a reason; sometimes it seems they made up things to fight about.

"Because Rikki could have easily dried us before she came in if she had only kept her mouth shut!" Emma yelled, turning to Rikki again, ready to let her have it.

"That's what I was about to tell you!" Rikki flung her arms out.

"What?" Emma looked at her with a quizzical expression.

"See? If you would just stop to listen." Rikki grumbled. "Remember when we were stuck in the cubicle?" She continued.

"Yeah..." She nodded slowly.

"I thought that if I dried us while we were jammed there, we might end up kicking each other in the face or something, so I wanted us to be side-by-side, so when we dried, our legs were next to each other and weren't anywhere else." Rikki huffed, crossing her arms over her chest.

"Oh. Now I get it." Emma nodded in understanding.

"Uh huh."

"Okay now that... whatever that was is over, wasn't there somewhere you were supposed to be, Cleo?" Bella turned to me as she said the last part of her sentence.

"Oh, yes!" I said, suddenly remembering.

"Bye. Love you guys." I gave them a hug as they shot questioning looks at each other. I dashed out of the mall, looking out to the dazzling sapphire ocean. I headed down to one of our well-known secluded coves. I nearly lost my nerve when I thought that I'd be leaving my family and best friends. _You're doing this for Lewis_. I kept reminding myself.

I said my last silent goodbyes and jumped into the water, praying that I wouldn't be coming back alone.

* * *

><p>So, she's off to America! I hoped you liked it, and if you did, please review, actually, review even if you didn't like it! I like to hear what you think. And since it's the holiday season, I'm going to be quite busy even though it's the holidays! But I promise I will update as regularly as I can. See you soon!

4. Chapter 4

Hello again! Here is another chapter of Kidnapped Love! I hope you're enjoying it.

* * *

><p>Rikki woke up, fear flooding her senses. Then she remembered her promise. She reached over the bedside table and clutched her phone in her hand, dialling Emma's number.<p>

"Hello?" A voice came up on the other end.

"Hi Em. It's Rikki." The girl said sadly.

"Oh, hi. I'll call Bella and we'll head to the Setori's together, okay?"

Rikki didn't respond.

"It'll be alright. We'll find her, she'll be safe, and everything will go back to normal. Remember that." The line went dead, and Rikki knew that Emma was still trying to convince herself everything would be fine. Rikki pulled the covers away, the morning cold leaking into her body. She got up, brushed her hair, and tiptoed out the door so as not to wake her father.

* * *

><p>Emma sighed and turned her eyes up to the ceiling, clutching her phone to her chest. She couldn't cry. She wouldn't. She pressed her hand to her eyelids, as if that could keep them from brimming over.<p>

'_Please, just wherever she is, let her be safe._' She prayed. She looked at her phone, scrolling down the contacts list until she hit _Bella_. She pressed call.

"Bella speaking." The girl's voice was cracked with tears.

"Hey Bella."

"Oh, hi Emma." Bella attempted to cheer up, but she couldn't.

"We're going to head over to the Setori's and see if they-" She let out a sob. "Have anything else." She finished.

"Okay. I'll meet you there in five." She hung up. Emma sighed and got up and opened her dresser, pulling out a silver striped t-shirt and some jeans. After she got dressed she headed out the door, giving a vague goodbye to her parents. She started a brisk walk down the familiar streets, the cold clinging to her skin. She soon found herself on the path that led straight by the Setori residence, seeing the house made her walk faster, almost running. She found herself at the door quickly, and knocked on it timidly. It opened and she was met with a red-eyed and sniffly Sam, who ushered for her to come in. Emma cautiously stepped inside, looking into the living room to see Bella with tears falling from her eyes, and Rikki sitting on the couch, clutching her head, as if that would keep her from falling apart. Emma took a seat next to her, patting the spare spot beside her so Bella could sit down. The distraught girl obeyed.

"So, have you gotten anything?" Emma was the first to speak up, looking over the family, Sam clutching her husband, tears spilling out of her eyes, Don whispering soothing words into her ear, even though he still needed reassurance himself. And even Kim was oddly quiet, but Rikki could have sworn she saw a tear slip out of the girl's eye.

"No." Don answered, not saying anything else for fear that he would start to cry as well. The room was silent, and the only sound that could be heard was the sound of the ticking clock.

"You know, after twenty-four hours, the police will want photos." Emma spoke up, recalling the last time she said that, when Cleo had run away after Charlotte had stolen her locket and said that Lewis didn't want anything to do with her.

Little did she know, that this time, Cleo had once again, run away because of Lewis.

"I just wish we knew where she was." Bella whispered almost frustratedly. Rikki got up and whispered something in her ear, and Bella's eyes widened as she nodded. Bella then whispered something into Emma's ear, knowing she would agree.

"Uh, we just have to go out for a while." Emma said, standing up. Don and Sam nodded, not saying a word. The three saddened girls exited the house.

"So, we're searching the sea. How far off Mako do you propose we go?" Bella asked, looking to Rikki.

"I don't know, as far as we can?" She shrugged in response.

"Rikki, that isn't exactly a well thought-out plan. We'd exhaust ourselves." Emma said, looking to the fiery mermaid.

"Since when was I know for well thought-out plans?" Rikki raised her eyebrows.

"Since never." Emma said with a slight laugh. Meanwhile, Bella had been watching, anger building up with every word.

"How can you act that way when Cleo is out there, alone?" She spoke out angrily, which was very unusual for the normally kind and bubbly girl.

"We're just acting normally, Bella. The way Cleo would want it." Rikki put her hands on Bella's shoulders.

"You speak as though she's dead!"

"Of course she's not dead, Bella. None of us believe that. Cleo is a smart girl. She'd have a reason for running off the way she did." Emma spoke up, trying to comfort the girl.

"I just want her to come back..." Bella whispered, hanging her head.

"We all do. This is why we're looking for her, okay?" Rikki gave her hand a reassuring squeeze. Bella looked at the two girls and felt selfish. They had known Cleo much longer than she had, how must they be feeling?

'_They're being so brave..._' Bella thought. '_I have to be brave for them, and Cleo._'

"Okay, let's go." She said with a new amount of confidence. Then an unwelcome thought popped into her head. "Wait, shouldn't we tell Zane?" She asked. Rikki turned to her, a flash of anger passing through her eyes at the mention of Zane.

"Why would we do that?" She almost growled.

"Well..." Bella said quietly, intimidated by Rikki's sudden change of behaviour. She swallowed before continuing. "He knew her when they

were younger, didn't he? And-

"And he was a total snob." Rikki cut in. Emma put a firm hand on her shoulder.

"Let Bella speak." She said. Bella nodded before continuing.

"And since he was friends with us, and Cleo, he would want to know." She finished.

"He wouldn't care." Rikki scoffed.

"Rikki, I think he might. Bella has a point."

"Fine." Rikki said through gritted teeth. "We'll tell Zane."

* * *

><p>Rikki marched determinedly up to the caf  , Emma and Bella following timidly in her wake. It wasn't the fact that she was to meet up with Zane that had aggravated her so, (well, maybe a little) but it was the fact that her friends had brought up and acted upon it, as though her internal war didn't matter and was going unnoticed. She entered the caf  , neatly sliding through the beaded curtain, and Zane turned around to welcome his next customer. His eyes lit up when he saw who it was.

"Rikki?" He asked slowly, as if savouring the privilege to say her name.

"Yes, it's me." She said matter-of-factly, then sighed. "Your dream come true."

"How do you know what my dreams are about?" He narrowed his eyes playfully.

"Don't even try, Zane." She stopped him up short. "I'm not here for chit-chat."

"Well, what are you here for?" He asked, and his face fell slightly when he saw Bella and Emma enter the building.

"We have some rather... unsettling news for you." Emma spoke up, walking towards the counter and taking a seat.

"Would you like a drink while you're here?" He questioned.

"No, we're not-" Rikki was cut off.

"Well, _I _for one would love a drink." Emma interrupted, glaring at her, as if saying: '_Play_ _nice'. _"Do you want one Bella?" Emma turned to her friend.

"Yes please. Cranberry Booster."

"Could I please have a Kiwi Strawberry?" Emma asked.

"Coming right up." Zane said almost dejectedly, gazing at Rikki.

"Fine." She huffed. "I'll have a Kiwi Strawberry as well."

Zane smiled, heading over to the machine.

"I can't believe you talked me into this!" Rikki hissed into Emma's ear.

"I didn't talk you into anything. You know we're doing this for Cleo and he deserves to know." She whispered back.

She scoffed. "He doesn't deserve anything from us."

"What's with all the whispering?" Bella joined in the hushed conversation, whispering herself.

"Nothing." Emma said, returning to normal volume. Zane came back over and handed the girls their drinks.

"So, what did you want to talk about?" He asked.

"Well... it's hard to explain..." Emma trailed, feeling a pang of pain stab at her heart.

"Is it..." He lowered his voice. "Mermaid problems?"

"For one, we wouldn't want your help even if it was, and secondly, you wouldn't help anyway." Rikki snapped.

"Rikki..." He looked to her helplessly. Then he noticed something. "Hey, where's Cleo?" He questioned, knowing she would usually be here.

"That's the thing..." Bella said in an almost-whisper, tears threatening to spill from her eyes once more.

"Cleo..." Emma trailed off, biting her lip. Rikki looked at her two friends with empathy.

"Cleo has gone missing." She finished the sentence that they couldn't. Fear and alarm crossed across Zane's eyes, and Rikki realised that it had been the right thing to tell him.

"What? How? When?" He asked frantically.

"Yesterday. We had lunch, and then she had somewhere to be..." Emma whispered, realising that they may have been able to stop her.

"Oh my gosh." He ran his fingers through his hair. "I never expected this, and this is _Cleo _we're talking about..."

"How do you know she isn't just hiding like with The Charlotte Incident?" He asked, trying to calm a little, because he could tell his panic was having an effect on the girls, especially Rikki.

"We're going to search the ocean, but she isn't anywhere on land." Bella explained.

"We've tried everything." Rikki buried her face in her hands and ran her fingers through her hair, about to succumb to the hysteria that

had been building up in her ever since she had heard the news.

"It's going to be alright." Zane took her hand, and looking into his eyes calmed her, though she didn't know why.

"I just don't know what to do." She whispered, and for a moment it was just her and Zane, no one else. That moment ended quickly though, and her grief-clouded eyes cleared for a moment and she realised what she was doing. She ripped her hand away, but she would never admit that for a second she missed it's familiar warmth, and a look of disgust and slight disbelief passed across her eyes for a second as she stepped back in line with Bella and Emma. (Even though they were sitting.)

"Come on, let's go. We've told him, there's no need for us to be in this... _place _any longer." She ushered for them to leave, and put her hands in her pockets, bringing some money out.

"It's on the house."

"Okay then." She backed away a little further from him, and in her mind, the sooner they left, the better. The three departed the building, leaving a saddened Zane, who was saddened in more ways than one.

"Rikki, wait!" He cried, chasing after them.

"What do you want now, Zane?" She asked in an annoyed tone. Bella and Emma took a step back, knowing that they shouldn't intervene. And frankly, they didn't want to be caught in the cross-fire of another Rikki-Zane fight, if they were a couple or not.

"I hope you find her." He said sincerely, and his sentence caught her off guard, because she thought he would start another monologue about how they should get back together. "And when you do, tell me. Don't leave me out."

"You did always love a scandal..."

"Rikki, this is serious!" He looked into her eyes and took her by the hands. "Our friend is out there, and we need to do whatever we can to get her back safe. I do care about you guys, about Cleo, and... about you." He squeezed her hands tighter. "Please."

His last comment shocked her, for Zane Bennett had never said please in his life.

"Okay." She said quietly. "We'll keep you informed. But that's it." She dropped her hands back to her sides and took a step away from him.

"Thank you." He said, and knowing he was not wanted there, he walked back into the caf  .

* * *

><p>"Okay, so we try to find her by ocean now?" Rikki asked as the three girls walked down the pavement.<p>

"Yep." Emma nodded, and Bella was oddly silent.

"Bella, what's wrong?" Rikki tilted her head in concern.

"Oh, nothing. Just thinking." She waved them off.

"About what?" Emma persisted.

"Things."

"Tell us, Bella." Rikki urged, her need-to-know instincts kicking in. But those instincts only came when dealing with friends and boyfr-_ex_-boyfriend.

"I was just thinking... What if we find Cleo and she's... dead?" She asked, barely able to summon enough courage just to say it.

"That's not going to happen." Rikki said firmly.

"But what if it does? What do we do then?"

"Then we'll tell the Setori family, and we'll work our way from there." Emma said, fighting tears.

"But that will never happen. Cleo is too... too... too alive to be dead." Rikki said with confidence, which she didn't know where she got from.

"Yes, you're right. That won't ever happen." Bella agreed happily.

"Okay, here's the beach." Emma stopped walking to show the entrance to a secluded bay. The girls walked in.

"So, we all set?" Rikki asked, looking to her friends.

"Yep." Bella nodded.

"Yeah." Emma nodded as well. Then the three mermaids took off for the water, diving in head-first.

* * *

><p>Later...

Rikki looked to Emma with a sad expression, shaking her head once again. Emma put her hands to her face, before motioning for Rikki to swim upwards. The two mermaid's heads popped up above the water, each one with a solemn look in their eyes.

"Let's go get Bella." Emma said with no amount of happiness in her voice. Rikki nodded and they sunk below the surf, rushing off to get their friend.

* * *

><p>Bella had insisted to swim separately, for reasons that she herself were unsure of. Maybe it was because she needed time to sort out her grieving thoughts. She felt an almost timid tap on her shoulder, and turned around to be met face-to-face by Emma. The girl motioned upwards, and Bella obediently swam into open air.<p>

"But we haven't found her yet!" She burst out, knowing what her fellow two mermaids were there for.

"We don't want to tire ourselves out. We'll look tomorrow." Rikki spoke up, who was behind Emma.

"Fine." Bella said reluctantly. The three mermaids swam back to shore, dried themselves off, and walked back to their homes, hoping that they would find Cleo in the morning.

Of course, that wasn't going to happen.

* * *

><p>After each girl had gone back to their home, they attempted to think rationally of all the places Cleo could be. Then Emma struck something. She fumbled to get her phone, tripping over it. She called Rikki, and put it on three-way so Bella could converse as well.<p>

"Guys!" She exclaimed.

"Yes?" Rikki asked, rather annoyed.

"I was thinking, maybe Cleo left something in her room!"

"Like a clue?" Bella questioned.

"Yes!"

"Wow, chill out for a second, Em. Clues? Really? Cleo doesn't seem like a
let's-lead-you-all-on-a-murder-mystery-and-then-find-out-it-was-your-old-schoolmate-out-for-revenge type of girl."

"No she doesn't- Rikki, I swear, you need to stop watching those horror movies- but she does seem like the type to leave a note or a sign of where she went."

"Like a horse-statue-that-was-given-to
you-by-a-little-boy-in-kindergarten-and-then-you-find-out-he's-your-true-love-and-you-go-on-a-quest-to-find-him? That totally sounds like Cleo."

"She told you." Bella remarked.

"Be quiet or I'll set one of your sundresses alight." Rikki snapped.

"But, that would be perfect, I was thinking of going as a zombie who died in a house fire for Halloween." She replied sarcastically.

"Awesome. I'll come over at three." Rikki laughed.

"Guys! Back to the point!"

"Oh right. So, meet at the Setori's in five minutes?" Bella asked.

"Sounds good to me." Emma agreed.

"Uh, could you make that ten? I need to do something first." Rikki asked.

"Sure, meet you there in ten." Emma hung up.

"Bye." Bella's line cut off.

"I was going to say bye, but you two left me before I got the chance!" Rikki shouted into the phone before hanging up as well. She sighed before getting up.

* * *

><p>10 minutes later...

The girls all met up at the Setori house.

"Mr. Setori, we were wondering if we could go into Cleo's room." Emma asked. He nodded silently, and the girls made their way up the stairs, stopping to open the door to Cleo's room. They walked in, smiling at all the fond memories it brought to the surface.

"What's this?" Bella picked up a book- it looked more like a photo album, and opened it.

"Guys, look at this!" Bella motioned for them to come over there. The two walked over to the girl and peered inside the book.

"Isn't that Cleo and Lewis?" Emma asked.

"Yeah, it is. Like you need to ask to verify who he is." Rikki rolled her eyes, knowing she could identify him on the spot. Then she noticed something. "Hey, these pictures- they're all of Cleo and Lewis!"

"So they are." Bella leafed through the pages faster, and they were indeed all of Cleo and Lewis. "It was on her bed, so this might have been the last thing she looked at."

"Well, aren't you the little detective?"

Emma rolled her eyes at her friend. "But Cleo doesn't like to leave things like these lying around." She paused. "Especially when they have _mermaid _pictures in them!"

"She might have looked at it, put it away, then pulled it out again and forgot to put it back." Bella suggested.

"Sounds like Cleo." Rikki shrugged. "Especially when there's Lewis involved." She raised her eyebrows.

"We have to keep looking." Emma eased the book out of Bella's hands, and something fell out of it.

"What's this?" Bella bent down to pick it up.

It was a picture of Lewis trying to push Cleo into the moon pool, and

in the background, Rikki was shouting '_Throw her in!_' while Emma looked very displeased with the whole situation but couldn't keep a slight smile off her face. And Bella was just laughing at the scene.

"Rikki, come look at this." Bella called, because Rikki had gotten bored with the photo album and had gone to do something else.

"I remember that day." She smiled, which was a rare thing to happen in the past two days.

"Come on, we've got to keep looking." Emma hurried to another unoccupied side of the room. Bella slid the picture carefully back into the album and put it on the shelf.

"Who's going to feed her fish?" Rikki asked, tapping some food into the tank.

"Who knew you cared about animals?" Bella raised her eyes, amused.

"Well, I know they mean a lot to Cleo, and I was wondering what's going to happen to them." She shrugged and placed the fish food back on the shelf.

"Guys, come look at this!" Emma ushered them to her. They hurriedly walked over, to see what she was talking about. She held up a broken picture frame, Emma took the picture out, to reveal a secret picture of the four as mermaids.

"What do you see?" She asked.

"I see that you broke Cleo's picture and I see a hidden picture of us as mermaids that isn't so hidden anymore." Rikki remarked smartly.

"Yes, but take _that_ picture out." She said impatiently. Bella gently eased the picture out, and a piece of paper fell to the floor.

"What do we have here?" Rikki picked it up and they all started reading it.

Dear Rikki, Bella and Emma

By the time you read this, I will have vanished. Kim, if this is you reading- GET THE HECK OUT OF MY ROOM! So, if this is you guys reading this, I assume my dreadful sister has obeyed my orders and has gone away to tell tales to my father. As if she would ever leave this alone. So guys, I just want to say- I am not dead! Hallelujah! You make me feel special. Okay, I am not a bragger and never will be, so back to the point. You will have heard this before (I hope many times) but, I love you. You make me feel wanted and appreciated, even with Rikki's sarcastic comments. So, back to my initial point. I have not died, I am not missing, I will return, hopefully soon. I will not tell you where I am going, and if you ever find out, please don't come find me. (Even though I know Rikki will be very tempted to be disobey any orders I give her, regardless of where I am in the world) I would like you to keep this letter to yourselves. Do not tell Dad or Sam, and I know you would never tell Kim. _

_For Rikki: You were always by my side, (I'm sorry Emma, but she was) and when Emma left you helped me through it. We stayed together, even if it was only really a day to fend for ourselves before Bella came along. And when Lewis left, you helped me. You came right up to me and asked me how I was, and I will be eternally grateful for your unfailing support. (The only time it failed was maybe when I took more interest in Lewis' scientific projects and we turned nerd on you) And please, smooth things out with Zane. I am not saying you should get back together, I am not a traitor. Just try to play nice. For me? _

_For Emma: You have been with me the longest, even through kindergarten when we had to fight off the vicious attacks of Zane and his groupies, you stayed there. What a surprise a girl named Rikki would smooth off his rough edges, huh? You were always so neat, tidy and organised. Gosh, it was funny at Christmas. Running around like a chicken with your head chopped off, sorting out the presents, making the tree just right- and when you bought the tree that was on a slant! Hilarious. _

_For Bella: You're the new one to the group, but I can't imagine it without you. I seriously think we'd all be depressed by Rikki's pessimistic views if it wasn't for you. (The girl hates Valentines, Christmas, and her birthdays! What the heck is wrong with her?) I love your bubblyness, your always optimistic view on life and your kindness. We'd be stuck without you. And we'd be stuck without birthday presents for Rikki. (I'm sorry, Emma. Yours suck, they just melt!) And we'd be at a loss for when we really need a blender to explode on Sophie. You got my sister fired! Good job. _

_And that's it. I don't have anything for the boys- because really, they aren't as special as you. And guys? If I don't come back- don't deny it, it might happen. Don't grieve too long over me. I want you to be happy, and Rikki? If I die, be happy with Zane. Promise me. Also take care of my fish. And another thing, if I don't come back, tell my Dad and Sam I'm a mermaid. Do it for me. And if Kim opens her annoying little mouth about how she was right, shut her up. (Rikki, I'm entrusting you with that job. Bella and Emma will be too soft on her) _

I really do love you guys, and I promise to try and come back soon.

_Cleo _

By the end of it, Bella and Emma were sniffing, and Rikki was trying to keep herself together. The three girls walked back downstairs, and asked if they could use the printer. They each photocopied a letter, and took it home with them.

And they all- even Rikki, cried themselves to sleep.

* * *

><p>Awww, you almost gotta feel sorry for them. I know having a chapter just based at home with no actual Cleo in it is a bit weird, but otherwise it would have just been a chapter full of swimming. And that is a bit boring. Plus, I think this worked out well, and there was Zikki in it! I'm sorry; I couldn't resist putting

it in. I know this is a Clewis story, but still. I hate to see them broken up. There shall be a lot of Cleo in the next chapter! And there probably won't be another chapter like this one, or if there is, it will be alternating between Cleo and the girls back home. See you soon!

5. Chapter 5

****Oh my gosh, I am so _sorry _guys! I feel so awful. I haven't updated in ages, I honestly don't know if people are still reading this thing... but, I'll try to make up for my horrid authoriness! Here's a chapter... hope you like it... ****

* * *

><p>Cleo dragged herself up from the surf, and lay there with her arms over her stomach until she got her legs back. She was in Hawaii- a resting point before she got to her destination. She sighed heavily and wished the drying process to go faster. As she lay there, her eyelids drooped, but she willed herself to stay awake. She lay there for what seemed like an eternity, but was really only about ten minutes, and finally felt the tingling rush up her body and saw that she had legs in place of a tail that had been there so long. She scrambled up the sand, nearly collapsing as she reached a small town where she bought some supplies.<p>

"Oh honey, you don't look like you've gotten much sleep." A woman at the counter remarked, seeing Cleo's fatigue-marked face.

"I'm fine." She said simply, attempting to brighten up and look like she hadn't just ran a marathon with no training. Thinking of marathons reminded her of Will, and she immediately shut down her thoughts. She couldn't think of home or she might just find herself swimming back there. She exited the small shop, giving a sincere goodbye to the concerned woman as she exited the door. She sighed and looked around, seeing people milling about, going from store to store, some rushing off to work, and some just enjoying a beautiful day outside. She smiled and walked back down to the beach she had come in by, finding a small cove.

She slipped in, and it was as close to perfect as you could get, despite lacking electrical wiring and constant warmth that so many homes had. She put her little pack beside her, and relaxed as much as she could onto the hard stone. Even though it was incredibly uncomfortable, Cleo found herself soon dozing off into sleep.

Cleo's eyes snapped open, and she briefly wondered where she was.

"Right." She muttered, tracing her fingers on the cave walls. She stood up, as the cove was big enough for her to stand. She ran her fingers through her hair, re-tying it up in a messy bun. She reached down into her bag and pulled out a flashlight, turning it on. It shone brightly, hurting her eyes, but soon they adjusted and it was welcome light. She turned it off- as she had only turned it on in the first place to see if it was working- and headed out the small entrance. She pondered about walking around, familiarising herself with the town, but realised it would be futile, because she was leaving the next day. She ran her fingers through her hair again

before letting out a semi-frustrated sigh, and exiting into broad daylight.

"Wow." She groaned in protest. Her eyes soon adjusted, and she started walking around.

"Hey you!" A male voice called out. "You, girl!"

Cleo jumped behind a boulder, hoping that whoever it was would leave her alone. She looked over the rock, intrigued by what she would see. And much to her surprise, a slightly tanned blond-haired girl ran up to the boy and hugged him.

"Lisa!" The boy twirled her round and kissed her. Cleo couldn't bear to watch any more. She crept away, sand rubbing on her denim shorts. She leant against the boulder and took a deep breath. She held her hand up to her head and tried to mentally shake off the headache that had been provoked by the many tears she had shed over the past few days. She wiped the sand off her clothes and relaxed her head against the stone. She let out a sigh and allowed her mind to wander. As always, it landed on Lewis.

_Cleo had just met up with Rikki and Emma after work, glad to be out of the place after a hard and demanding day.__"I'm so glad to be out of there." She complained._

"Tough day?" Emma raised her eyebrow and displayed a concerned smile.

"You wouldn't believe it." Cleo groaned in response, rolling her eyes.

"Well, let's get rid of any reminder of that, then." Rikki grinned mischievously and flicked Cleo's work hat off her head and to the ground. Emma's compulsive urge to have everything neat kicked in and she picked the hat off the concrete, brushing the dust off it before hiding it behind her back.

"Emma, Emma, Emma." Rikki shook her head and chuckled. Emma whipped the hat out from behind her back and hit Rikki over the head with it. "Ow!"

"She did warn you to stop saying bad things about her orderly side." Cleo laughed.

"I didn't say anything!" Rikki cried out.

"Don't think them, then." Emma said with a nod.

_"Hey girls!" Lewis ran up to them with a happy expression on his face. "So what are we doing this lovely afternoon?" __The girls looked at him with blank faces.__"Oh come on, it's an amazing day! We should do something fun!" He argued profusely against their expressions._

"Err, Lewis, I know you're Cleo's boyfriend and all, but isn't this a bit much? We were going to have a day for us three. You know, a girl's day out." Rikki remarked, her blue eyes fixing him with a glare.

_"I am a girl!" The girls looked at him strangely. "I mean, I'm one of you guys, one of the team." _

Rikki opened her mouth to protest when Emma cut in. "Fine. Tag along, don't make noise, and for goodness sake, leave science out of the picture for one afternoon."

"You're no fun." He sulked for a split-second before getting an icy glare from Rikki that changed his mind. "But okay."

"Good. What should we do?" Cleo questioned happily.

"Movie? Swim? Drowning Lewis seems like a lot of fun." Rikki suggested. Lewis gulped.

"She's just kidding." Cleo reassured her boyfriend, shaking her head in amusement. "You are kidding, aren't you?"

"I guess you'll never know." Rikki said vaguely before laughing. "Juice? Gives Emma an excuse to see Ash." She raised her eyebrows at her friend.

"Let the rest of us make a suggestion, Rikki." Cleo mock-ordered, covering for Emma who was trying to slip out of the conversation.

"Yeah. How about we go fishing?" Lewis suggested, his eyes lighting up with delight.

"The drowning option is sounding better every second..." Rikki said with an underlying tone of warning.

"Cleo will go fishing with me, right?" He stepped towards his girlfriend and took her hand, ignoring Rikki's somewhat-threat.

"If we did go fishing, your line would probably end up disappearing due to anonymous sources." Cleo raised her eyebrows and looked at Rikki accusingly.

"Good point." He laughed.

"Why can't we just decide on what to do?" Emma moaned.

"Too many people, I think." Rikki shot a look to Lewis.

"Yeah, we could definitely do without Rikki." He fired back.

"Stop it, both of you." Cleo ordered.

"Fine." Rikki said bitterly, then smirked. "I promise I won't let Lewis be annoying."

"I should take that as a threat if I were you, Lewis." Emma warned.

"Oh, I'm not worried. I have Cleo to protect me. You'll protect me, won't you Cleo?" He looked to her with a smile.

"Sure will."

The four friends laughed.

Cleo pulled herself out of her memories. "Not a time to think about home." She muttered. She heaved herself up and started walking. She wondered where to go and settled on strolling through the town despite her earlier decision not to, seeing that her options as to what she could do were limited. She made her way off the beach and onto solid ground, and heard the bustles of the small town.

She thought to herself about how comfortable it was, how relaxing. She strolled through the town with a content smile on her face and blocked out any thoughts of home or Lewis to dampen her mood, however hard it might be. She hummed as she walked around, examining the content of each store before moving onto the next one. Her smile suddenly dropped as she heard a familiar ringtone escape her right pocket. She fished her phone out with an annoyed sigh, though honestly she thought it would bring relief to see a familiar name. She examined her phone and the screen lit up with _Rikki._

She took a second deliberating whether or not she would answer it. She knew it really would be best not to, but she wanted to talk to her old friend. It wasn't as though they could know where she was, they'd need pretty high tech police equipment for that. Or that's what all the movies told her. She let out one more sigh before placing the phone to her ear and accepting the call.

"Hello, Rikki." She answered in an annoyed tone.

"Thank goodness, Cleo! Where are you? Are you safe? WHY IN THE WORLD DID YOU RUN OFF?" The anxious girl on the other end screamed into the phone. Thinking about it, Cleo thought that she could hear screams in the background. But that was probably just her imagination.

"Didn't you get the note?"

"Of course we got the note! We were searching around your room like stupid detectives, and Emma broke that picture frame-"

"Calm down. Just a question." Cleo had to stop her friend from rambling further.

"Cleo, come back. Please. Emma and I are just about having mental breakdowns, and Bella's all deflated and she mutters your name constantly and stuff, I think she's going a little out of it..." Rikki pleaded, her voice desperate.

"No, Rikki." Cleo said firmly.

"But you have to! We need you, Cleo."

Cleo was about to answer, when-

"No! I'm talking to Cleo!" Rikki whined.

"All the more reason for you to give it to me!" She could hear Emma cry as she snatched the phone off Rikki. "Cleo, are you okay? You need to come back! We're all so worried!"

"Sorry, Em. I can't." Cleo said, and it sounded as though she was suffering just to do that.

"But you have to!" She said, almost whining. "We can't manage without you! At least tell us where you are!" She yelled, switching from sentence to sentence rapidly, her thoughts desperate.

"Nope." Cleo said airily, her mind made up.

"_Cleo!_"

"Yes, Emma?"

"Come back, we're all going hysterical." She paused as she realised that Cleo really did not want to answer. "Please, just tell us you're safe. _Promise us_, you're safe."

"I'm safe." Cleo took a sharp breath in. "I promise."

She tried not to think about how that fact could soon change.

* * *

><p>Later...

After the phone call, Cleo was back in her cove. She found her head lazily thudding against the rock, and remembered a small buzzing pain before she fell asleep.

Her mind drifted off, and wandered into a dream.

* * *

><p>Cleo jolted up in her bed, looking around her familiar surroundings. Home. After a few minutes of nostalgia, she ruffled her hair then tugged on her thin dressing gown and walked noisily down the stairs.<p>

"Morning, darling daughter of mine." Don beamed brightly from his place on the kitchen table, reading his regular Fishing Weekly magazine, the one that Lewis always had a copy of or tried to steal.

"Morning." Cleo yawned.

"Hello." A grinning voice came from behind Cleo, making her jump.

"Ah!" She whirled around, eyes filled with alarm before they softened at the sight of the figure in front of her. "Oh, Lewis I didn't realise you were here." She exhaled, putting a hand up to her chest and feeling the throbbing of her heart.

"Sorry to startle you." He smiled happily at her.

"It's fine." She murmured.

"I was wondering if you wanted to do something today?" He rose his eyebrows in question.

"I don't know," She yawned, walked over to the sofa and flopped down. "I'm tired."

"You should have spent more time in bed." He sat down next to her and took her hand with a concerned smile on his face, trying to ignore the penetrating gaze Don was casting on the two while hiding behind a stack of Kim's math books.

"Maybe," She yawned again. "But I'm fine here." She snuggled back into the soft red cushions.

"Then stay here and relax." Lewis nodded firmly, his mind made up as he saw Cleo's eyelids fluttering as she nearly slipped out of consciousness.

"No," Cleo's eyes snapped open and she sat up. "Too much to do." She shook her head. "I want to meet Bella and Rikki..." She yawned again, covering her hand with her mouth.

"Okay, okay," He settled Cleo back down against the cushions. "But promise me you'll get some more sleep." He offered.

"But-" Cleo protested.

"Nope." Lewis shook his head firmly and crossed his arms over his chest. "Now, you march up those stairs and lay your pretty little head on that pillow."

"I heard that!" Don shouted from the kitchen. Both Cleo and Lewis smiled at each other, eyebrows raised.

"Oh hush." They heard Sam playfully scolding him. Cleo and Lewis laughed.

"Now, off you go." Lewis ushered.

"But I don't-"

"Go." Lewis said and pointed to the stairs, his eyes firm.

"Fine, _mum_." Cleo stood up, poked her tongue out at Lewis, and walked upstairs.

Cleo nestled herself in her bed, her eyelids fluttering as she felt herself fall asleep.

* * *

><p>Cleo shot up with a startled scream.<p>

What was that?

She ruffled her messy hair and tied it into a ponytail. She pushed herself hurriedly off the rock and went outside, shielding her eyes from the light.

She really did have to stop thinking about Lewis so much. She shook her head, and unfortunately for her, that only made her headache worse, but she tried not to think of Lewis as she started strolling across the beach.

She looked out to the water, and somehow, it calmed her. Her eyes travelled across the beach, and she frowned. There was no one there except her.

I mean, that's good for me, She thought. _But isn't it odd?_

Cleo walked across the golden sand, humming a simple tune, her mind as calm as it had been since Lewis had gone missing.

* * *

><p>Cleo spent the rest of the day strolling up and down the beach, and strangely, no one turned up.<p>

That is, until the sun had gone down and the clouds had turned to stars.

A group of teens made their way down to the beach, dressed in beach gear, talking and laughing. Cleo didn't notice them until she heard a boy laughing loudly, heading in her direction. Her dark-haired head turned swiftly towards them, and she quickly threw herself down against a boulder as soon as she had spotted the group.

She breathed hard and pressed herself up against the rock, trying to hear where the group had gone. She _really_ didn't want to be spotted. _But if I am spotted, _She thought, _I could just pretend I'm one of them_.

She tried to creep back to her cove, but someone saw her.

"Hey!" A tall, dark-haired boy ran up to her. "What are you doing here? You're supposed to be with the group."

Cleo went into red alert. "Uh, er, just, um, taking a walk. I'll come back now." She turned around and started walking toward the group of teens who were dancing and in the water.

Cleo looked at the boy to her right, he was actually quite handsome. Cleo sat down in the sand, looking out to the water. The boy sat beside her, and Cleo immediately tensed up.

"Are you new around here?" He asked, looking at her. "I've never seen you before."

"Uh, yeah." Cleo shrugged. "Just moved in."

"You're... really pretty." He said awkwardly.

"You don't spend much time talking to girls, do you?" Cleo looked at the boy before looking out to the ocean again. "I have a boyfriend."

"Oh." The boy stood up. "Sorry." He walked away to rejoin his friends.

At least he's polite. Cleo thought.

Unfortunately, Cleo hadn't noticed how much the tide had come in. It reached her feet and rolled over her toes, causing fear to spring

into Cleo's eyes. She immediately jumped up, knowing she only had ten seconds before she transformed. Her cove was too far away, she only had two choices. Jump behind some rocks, or in the ocean. The ocean was much safer.

She quickly dove into the water, feeling it rush against her skin.

But then, the oddest sensation washed over her. Fatigue coursed through her body. The current was too strong for her to fight, not like this.

What? Cleo thought as she tried to swim to deeper water. _What is this?_

Cleo's body gave out, and she was washed up onto the shore. She weakly lifted her head and looked around. She was completely vulnerable. She dug her fingers into the sand and dragged herself behind some rocks. Hopefully no one would see her there.

She tried not to draw any attention to herself, but suddenly, she heard footsteps.

In a flash, there was a girl standing in front of her, wide eyed, her mouth hanging open, looking at Cleo in all her mermaid glory.

The girl let out a scream.

"No, no, shhh!" Cleo said desperately, flopping her tail in frustration.

The girl seemed more startled by this than anything. And suddenly, with one word, Cleo's blood ran cold.

"_Mermaid!_"

* * *

><p>There. I hope it wasn't too terrible. I'd love to hear what you think, and hopefully I'll get the next chapter up soon!

6. Chapter 6

Hey there! Sorry the updates are slow moving for this story. I have the next chapter under way, though, so hopefully I'll get it up faster than this one. Hopefully.

* * *

><p>Cleo hitched her bag up on her shoulders and looked around with interest. Thank goodness she'd remembered a brush. Being seen as a girl with messy hair and tired eyes would definitely draw attention.<p>

Ugh, Cleo could barely listen to herself. She was thinking so stupidly, eyeing every passerby as some sort of threat. How a child skipping along and singing whilst she clutched her mother's hand could count as a threat, she didn't know.

Now, where had Lewis said that institute was? He had said it was in Boston. That she was sure of. But he had never given her an address, mainly because he always protested about her visiting him and didn't want her to think of it as a blank check for mayhem.

Right. Just look for an ominous white building that towers above everything else. That's what Cleo, and her friends, had always thought of all these science institutes. Just scary guys in lab coats wanting to dissect her. Maybe she was a little paranoid, but, well, you get hunted by loony scientists and see what you think then. Cleo pulled the straps of her backpack firmly around her shoulders again. Why did she have to buy such a big bag? A big bag meant big straps. That meant more bags falling off.

Cleo peered around, frowning. She was in the heart of the city. She had been wandering around for the good part of two hours, looking for this so called institute. She thought she remembered Lewis saying it wasn't in the middle of the city, more off to the side... but she really couldn't remember.

On the off chance she was right and her memory wasn't trying to deceive her, Cleo turned on her heel and started walking in the other direction. But most of it still looked the same, so Cleo couldn't tell whether she was heading the right way or just going around in circles. She peered around. Ugh, everything was all the same! Row after row of totally boring buildings. Where was the variety? The fire? Sam had always told her things had to have _essence._ Although she couldn't quite pinpoint exactly what that meant, she knew this town didn't have it.

Cleo stopped for a second, just letting the wind flow around her. She twirled around, frowning. Shaking her head, she kept walking. Great, she still had no idea where she was. She shrugged it off and continued her brisk walk, which was on the verge of a jog. She slowed down a little. She didn't want people to think she was rushing anywhere. She took a deep breath, willed herself to calm down, and started out again, but slower.

Still walking, Cleo swung her bag off her shoulders and opened it up. She took out her water bottle and took a long sip. After a few more gulps, Cleo dropped it back in her bag and repositioned the bag behind her back, holding the straps in place because it would fall off otherwise. She looked around again, searching for anything that would tell her where she was. Nope. She frowned. She hoped she would find the institute soon.

A wave of tiredness swept over Cleo, and she leant against a cement wall, closing her eyes. She was trying not to fall asleep, but it was hard. Cleo felt very fed up with herself. She sighed and leant against the wall. She shook herself. With a burst of anger, she snatched her brush out of her bag and tugged it through her hair, not bothering when it snagged on knots and sent shooting jolts of pain up her skull. She forced herself to take a deep breath and tied her hair back up. She swung her bag over her shoulder and started quickly walking, hoping she was composed.

Cleo walked past a store, snorting at it as she did so. Then she stopped. She turned and looked at it, facing the manikins dressed in spangly short dresses. She frowned. She looked up at the sky. The sun

wasn't that high, but would steadily rise in the hours to come. It was mid-morning, maybe somewhere between nine and ten. Her watch was still adjusted to Australian time, so she'd shoved it in her bag because she didn't care to have a watch that didn't work. Cleo stopped walking for a moment and looked to the sky again. She needed to find this place soon.

Cleo pulled her bag up her arms and held it tight. She started walking again, putting an end to her brief delay. She shielded her eyes and surveyed the buildings around her. She was venturing into a somewhat industrious part of town, with some residential lots scattered throughout the streets. Cleo sighed as the dull ache returned to her feet. She had been trying to ignore it, but she had been walking for hours. It was natural.

Cleo inhaled deeply and walked over to a jogger that was coming her way.

The woman turned to her, wiping her brow. She was drenched with sweat.

"Excuse me?" Cleo asked politely.

"Yes? Do you need something?"

"I was wondering if you could tell me what the time is," Cleo asked, holding her wrist out to the perspiring woman. "I've lost my watch."

The woman brought out a large water bottle and took a huge gulp.

"Sure," She panted, wiping at her forehead again and squinting at the watch fitted tightly on her left wrist. "It's about... ten."

Cleo nodded, considering this information for a moment. Ten sounded about right.

"Do you know where the... err..." Cleo didn't really know how to describe it. She cleared her throat. "The sciencey building is?"

The woman looked at Cleo for moment before dissolving into laughter. Cleo blushed.

"Why yes, I sure do. That 'sciencey building' is where my husband works," The woman said, smiling. She seemed not to be making fun of Cleo, and for that, she was grateful.

"So you know where it is, then?"

"Yes. Does your father work there?"

Cleo shrugged and rubbed the back of her neck. "Ahh... no. My boyfriend, actually. He got a scholarship."

The woman raised an eyebrow. "He must be quite the prodigy."

Cleo laughed, her first real laugh since she'd left her home. "Yeah, he's a great guy. I'm here to visit him."

"Well then." The woman turned and gestured to the sky. "The institute is on Halcyon Street. It's the creamy greyish building. You can't miss it." She explained, turning back to Cleo.

Cleo smiled gratefully. "Thank you."

The woman nodded and started jogging off, turning back to Cleo with a wave.

"Bye! Thanks a lot!" Cleo yelled out to her.

Cleo started walking in the direction the woman had pointed her in. She quickly typed in the password on her iPhone and looked up Halcyon Street, Boston. Cleo smiled. It wasn't too far away. She was glad. She didn't think her legs could take much more. And she wanted to find Lewis, of course.

Cleo raised her hand to her face, shielding her eyes from the sunlight gleaming off the reflective buildings. _Huh. Halcyon Street. Seems fitting._

(**AN:** **Halcyon means a time in the past that was idyllically happy and peaceful.**)

Cleo yawned and rubbed at her eyes, her fatigue and aching body only another reminder that she hadn't gotten a proper sleep in a while. Out of the corner of her eye, Cleo saw a child jumping in a puddle of water, reminding her of the incident she had been through yesterday...

"Mermaid!" The girl screamed again.

"No no, shh!" Cleo whispered urgently.

_"It's a mermaid! A real mermaid! Guys! Look! Over here!" The girl yelled. __Cleo rolled her eyes, grabbed the dirty blonde's hand, and yanked. The girl tumbled down next to Cleo, and Cleo clapped a hand over her mouth to prevent the girl from screaming again. __The girl tried to worm her way out of Cleo's grip and shriek louder, but Cleo just held her tighter._

_"Shut. Up." Cleo said firmly. "Do you understand?" _

_The girl nodded. __Cleo let go slowly. The girl scrambled up and continued to scream. __Cleo looked around desperately. She groaned and twisted her hand. __The girl was pulled into the water by a tentacle, shrieking all the way. Her friends had managed not to see a thing. __Cleo still looked around cautiously, waiting to hear accusations of being a mythical creature. There were none. Cleo let the wind and what remained of the sun dry her off, and hoped that the girl's companions would just put it down to inhaling too much seawater._

Cleo took out her phone, the memory gone. She smiled as she looked down at the picture of her and her friends. She sighed regretfully. _I miss them so much._ She thought. _If only I could hear their voices_...

Then a thought struck her. She quickly tapped in her passcode, making the image vanish. She _could _hear their voices. Bella's songs. Bella

didn't have any official songs, but Cleo had made her speak into a recording on her phone.

"Cleo, do I really have to do this?" Bella's disbelieving voice came through the phone's speakers.

"Yes! You said you would!"

"Oh fine... but this song? Really? It's so stupid!"

"Hey! This just happens to be one of my favourites. So shut up and sing."

Bella sighed. "I... Cleo, are you sure I'm doing this right?"

"Yes. Now keep going." Cleo urged.

_"I want to do a different song." C__leo had seen the firm look on Bella's face and sighed. "Fine. Which? But I'm warning you â€" I have to like it! No stupid songs Rikki's conned you into!"_

Bella chuckled. "Nothing like that. Here." Bella handed Cleo a sheet of lyrics and Cleo read it over and nodded.

_"Okay. Start." _

"Alright..." Bella cleared her throat and paused. "I'm still not sure."

"Come on! You promised you'd do this! I even gave you your own song!"

"I feel nervous!"

"But you promised me!"

"Please, Cleo? My tummy feels funny."

Cleo sighed and grumbled under her breath. "Fine. If you want, there's nausea pills downstairs."

"Thanks!"

Cleo grumbled as Bella's happy footsteps thumped down the stairs. Bella had soon returned, and resumed sitting with Cleo on the bed.

"Wait... you still have that running?"

"Yeah. You're feeling better now, right? We can do this again!"

"No Cleo!"

"Please? Bella! You promised me weeks ago!"

"I said no."

"Aw, come on!"

"If you don't turn that off, I will."

"Don't be such a killjoy â€""

At that point Bella had leaned over and pressed the end button. Cleo smiled at the memory of her friend's technically-not-stage-fright. She had no idea why Bella felt different about singing into a speaker; she had performed in front of live audiences dozens of times before. Cleo found herself idly wondering about what her friends were doing back on the Gold Coast. She brushed away a stray tear that ran down her cheek.

A flash of silver caught her eye and Cleo skidded to a stop. She looked up. Above her, a metal sign attached to a pole displayed Halcyon Street proudly for anyone to see. Cleo smiled. She was almost there. Cleo walked a little further until she felt a large shadow hanging above her head.

She looked up. Sure enough, there was a large greyish building to her left. She let out a laugh of joy and did a little happy dance. She peered up at the building, finding that the building provided a good enough shadow so she didn't have to cover her eyes from the sun. She walked up to it and pushed against the revolving door, finding herself toppling into a rather pleasantly decorated building.

A man strutted across the large room and must have caught sight of Cleo and her bewildered face, because he turned to her with a wide smile.

"Hello there. Can I help you?"

Cleo quickly composed herself, smoothing out her clothes and hair and trying to make it seem like her bag wasn't making a dive for the floor.

"Uh, hi," She stammered. She had thought about this countless times, but now she was here she didn't really know what to say. "I'm here to see someone. This is the sciencey institute thing... isn't it?"

The man let out a hearty laugh and grinned at Cleo. "Why yes it is. How can I help you?"

"I'm here to see my boyfriend."

The man raised an eyebrow in question. "And who might that be?"

"Lewis." Cleo said. "Lewis. That's his name. Do you know him?" She asked hopefully.

The man swallowed and looked around uncertainly. "Lewis McCartney? Is that the man you're talking about?" He asked.

Cleo nodded, her hope shining brighter than it had been a few minutes ago. "Yes, that's him. I'm looking for him. I was hoping you could point me in the right direction?" This was a half-truth. Cleo knew Lewis no longer resided at the institute, but maybe she could get this man to give her some information.

"I'm sorry, but he went missing a little while ago." The man admitted.

Cleo pretended to be surprised, letting out a girlish gasp. "What? I thought he just lost contact with me for a while... but, no, he can't be missing!" After all her years as a mermaid, Cleo lied convincingly.

The man walked towards Cleo and placed a reassuring arm around her shoulder. "I'm sorry. He just left. Is there anything I can do?" He asked, being completely sucked in by Cleo's 'insecure frightened girlfriend' act.

"Did he say anything? A note? _Anything?_" Cleo asked, effectively making her voice tremble.

"No. He just disappeared."

Cleo swallowed shakily. "Could I see his room?"

"Of course."

And so Cleo was led up to Lewis's room and left alone. Cleo looked around. She laughed a little " it was rather messy.

"Hmm." She took another look around the room, but this time viewing it more logically.

She raised her hands to her face and wiped away the tears that dribbled down at the sight of Lewis's fallen computer, still toppled over from the struggle. Cleo sniffed. She knew she'd probably have to start there. She wiped away a few more tears and sat down at the desk. She turned the computer upright and plugged it in " it had long since run out after being left on after Lewis's abrupt departure.

Cleo reached for a tissue as the screen flickered to life. She swivelled the mouse around, just to check if _that_ was still working. Cleo clicked on a folder labelled _Lewis_, and about a million other little things popped up. Cleo sighed. _I should've known my nerd wouldn't keep an immaculate computer. _She was about to click out of the folder, when something caught her eye. In the corner of the screen, there was a folder with her name on it.

Curiously, Cleo clicked on it. Various documents and images popped up, all about something retaining to her. Cleo sighed. She would very much like to spend a few hours looking at all of this, but not much was going to come of it. So she exited out of the folder and searched for something else of relevance. She raised an eyebrow as she clicked on a folder labelled _DO NOT LOOK!_

The folder came up easily, but there was only one item in it.

Mermaids.

Cleo immediately felt panic course through her. This was something that Lewis _definitely_ could have been kidnapped for. She hurriedly clicked on it.

It was encoded.

That boy! Cleo thought gleefully. _He's brilliant!_ She scrambled to think of what his passcode would be.

Mermaids?

Nope.

Sirens?

Nope.

_Science?__

>

>Nope.<p>

_Global warming?__

>

>Nope. Okay, even Cleo knew that was a stupid one.<p>

_Full moon?__

>

>Nope.<p>

_Moon pool?__

>

>Nope.<p>

Mako Island?

Nope.

Come on! What else could it be? Cleo thought, frustrated. In all her anger at her stupidity, Cleo typed in the only other two words that sprang to mind.

Cleo McCartney.

To her astonishment, the folder unlocked. Various documents and folders popped up, and Cleo peered at them all with interest. She clicked on the first one. _Rikki.__

>

>The first image was of Rikki glaring sourly up at the camera. Cleo laughed and went onto the next one.<p>

Next was a little clip of how Rikki used her powers to heat up water. The next two were the same but with fire and lightning. There was another image of Rikki's tail, then a zoomed in picture of the scales and ridges on her tail, and then Rikki's fin. _Man. Lewis sure is thorough. _The next few were drawn pictures of how a mermaid tail must work " Cleo herself had no idea " and how all the muscles moved as said mermaid swam.

Cleo soon got bored with this and exited out of the folder, clicking on the one labelled _Emma_ instead. This was basically the same as Rikki's " pictures of Emma, clips of her using her powers, Emma as a mermaid, swimming " all that. Cleo sighed. _I knew science calls for people to be repetitive " but come on!__

>

>She clicked on Bella's file. Now this was a little more interesting. There were various documents about how strange it was to have a new mermaid " and how odd her power was. Lewis had also done a whole lot of speculation on what her power would be if she were to receive an upgrade as Cleo, Rikki and Emma had. But other than that, it was the same " except for much more detail on her powers.

Cleo finally clicked on her own file. To her disappointment, it was relatively the same as the others. Except with a few more pictures of her smiling. Cleo smiled and exited out of the folder " maybe she would have time to look at all that later. There was a big document on the full moon and how it affected the mermaids, and how their behaviour varied when they were hit with one of the moon's beams. It also had a section about the Mako crystals, and what they did when in contact with each other, and various speculations on how they could cause a blackout like they had at Cleo's house the first time they'd tried.

There was also all that stuff he'd found out that first year they'd become mermaids " like how much water it took to change them and how long it took exactly. Approximately ten point twelve seconds. _Huh. Not much room for approximation there, Lewis._ Cleo scanned the rest of the folder, and, not finding anything else of much interest, decided she'd take a break from the computer to see what else she could find.

Cleo got up from the computer desk, shutting down the laptop and closing it. She snooped around the room, and found a big blue notebook sitting on Lewis's bedside table. Cleo raised an eyebrow and picked it up. _It's heavy._ She opened the first page delicately, and peered at the white pages with interest.

"The pH balance is exactly 1.2..." Cleo trailed off, grimacing slightly. _So this is the notebook Lewis kept telling me about!_ She thought. She skimmed through it, looking for something useful, instead of sciencey gobbledygook. She stopped on a rather interesting page.

It looked rather like a diary entry. Cleo raised an eyebrow and flipped a little more through the book. Yes, there were what seemed like personal logs in there mixed up with all the notes and research.

Cleo peered at the page with interest.

Oh no. This is bad. This is bad. This is very bad. What am I going to tell Cleo? No, I won't tell her. I can't. I won't crush her like that.

>

>Cleo frowned at the page. What had Lewis been so worried about? Cleo continued reading.<p>

_I've gotten a call from some strange people. Some very bad people. They wanted to know about mermaids. I tried to lie, but they could tell I wasn't telling the truth. Oh, help. I can't tell Cleo. She'll freak out. And then she'll tell Rikki, who'll swim over here personally and maim me. I'm in big trouble. They didn't sound like the kind of people for negotiations. _

I don't think I can talk my way out of this. Oh no, what if they come for me? I can't tell them anything. Whatever happens, I can't give Cleo and the girls up. I won't do that. I have to keep them safe, whatever I do. I have to keep Cleo safe.

The entry stopped there, and Cleo realised she was crying. She stumbled over to the chair and sat down, her head buzzing. She sniffed and got up, picking up the blue notebook from where it had fallen on the floor. She skimmed through it for anymore information of importance, but that page was all that retained to the mysterious people that had contacted Lewis. Cleo gripped the book tightly and grabbed some matches from inside a cabinet next to Lewis's bed. She grabbed an empty ice cream container, set the book in it, and set it alight.

When the book had been incinerated beyond recognition, Cleo drew some water out of the bathroom sink and doused the flames. She flushed the ashes down the toilet. Cleo looked around the room. She knew she had to leave soon.

Cleo decided to grab Lewis's laptop. She knew it could help her a lot in the future.

7. Chapter 7

Cleo opened her eyes to sunlight streaming through the cracks in the rock walls of a little cave she had found down on the beach. It was big enough for her and her stuff, and it was hidden from view. She took a moment to yawn and stretch, before immediately setting to work. She grabbed Lewis's laptop, which had luckily gained a good amount of charge from her time at the institute, and opened up the Internet, using the free wifi of a little beach front caf   that was close.

She grabbed her phone and thought for a moment. She downloaded an app that could track any phone and clicked on it. She had heard about it from Rikki    the blonde practically worshipped it, as it helped her find her phone when her notorious forgetfulness kicked in. Using his email and password    which she had conveniently conned him into giving her the last time he was in the Gold Coast    she could find out where Lewis's phone was now.

Cleo tossed the phone down with her extra clothes and bag, leaning against the rock. She could do all that later, and she didn't know how long her phone would take to find Lewis's, and she was getting impatient. Cleo grabbed her sunglasses and her backpack and headed out of the cave. She squinted in the sudden sunlight, her sunglasses doing little to stifle the sun's rays. She was a little worried that someone would find her cave and steal Lewis's laptop and her things, but she was quite convinced the cave was hidden unless someone knew where to find it or was looking very hard.

Cleo looked across the beach. It was early morning, and there were only a handful of people scattered across the sand. Cleo thought for a moment before running back into her cave, dumping her bag on the ground, and racing back out. She walked off the beach and into town, finding a beautiful patch of land which was ideal for her needs. Cleo sat crossed legged on the grass, just taking a few moments to herself.

She allowed her whirring mind to slow down as she took a few deep breaths. _I didn't realise how much I needed this, _Cleo thought. _I feel so much better now._ After a few more moments of relaxation, she got up and started walking back to her cave. _Huh. Maybe this town isn't so bad after all._ Cleo took her sunglasses off and ran her hand through her long hair. She eventually made it back to her little cave, and picked up her phone.

One device found.

Yes! She thought joyfully. _Lewis, I'm coming for you!_

She looked at the screen eagerly. _Now, where is he? Okay... _She peered at the words displayed on the screen. _74th Sovereign Street... Boston! He's in Boston! Yes!_

Cleo did a little happy dance and pranced around with her phone. She laughed and jumped up and down until she was exhausted. She collapsed against the rock, pulling a blanket around her and closing her eyes.

Cleo grabbed her backpack, totally energised after her long sleep. She tossed her phone in and pondered for a moment whether she should take Lewis's laptop. _No,_ she thought. _I'll leave it here._ She raced out of the cave and looked up Sovereign Street on her phone. _Okay. It's a little while away from here._

Cleo shaded her eyes from the light and set off. _Lewis, here I come!_

* * *

><p>Cleo edged around a grey, looming building. Sovereign Street was rather out of the way, and there was one building at the end, and down a slope.<p>

Cleo felt across the two faded, obviously old numbers. _74._ This was it. Cleo highly suspected that whatever was in this building could be a danger to her and Lewis, so she decided to only go around the edges of the building. She hid in the shadow of an overhang and listened earnestly for any voices.

"You know... don't think it's important... useless..." Was all Cleo could really make out " she was too far away from the voices. She moved a little closer and tried again.

"You know... his phone... anyone could track it..." Cleo's eyebrows rose at this piece of information. His phone. Lewis's phone? Were they talking about Lewis? Cleo tried listening again, but couldn't hear anything this time. She frowned and moved closer.

"Hey!" An angry voice came from behind her. Cleo whipped around. "What are you doing here?"

"Um... uh..." Cleo stuttered, but decided to just run. She broke out into a sprint, her heart racing. She heard loud footsteps behind her.

"Stop right there!"

Meanwhile...

Emma talked to the police nervously. A full out investigation had been launched about a week after Cleo's disappearance, and now all of the mermaids were being interrogated.

Rikki's screams could be heard in the room next to her.

"I told you! I don't know anything! She's my best friend for goodness sakes! What do you think, I kidnapped her?"

Emma gulped and stared at the woman before her. "Uh... when will we be finished?" She asked shakily.

"In a few minutes," The red headed policewoman replied smoothly.

"Why are you questioning me again? I thought we'd been over this?" Emma asked, her voice a little stronger this time.

The woman ignored her and read something that was written on the pad in her hands. "Don Sertori, the victim's father..."

"Cleo." Emma interrupted, glaring at the woman. "Her name is Cleo."

The woman nodded. "Alright then," She said, "Cleo's father said she had become secretive in the past few years. That has something to do with you, I believe?"

At the woman's accusing glare, Emma snapped. She was tired of being polite.

She stood up roughly, her eyes shooting flames. "Listen. I do not have anything to do with Cleo's disappearance. I did not know she was going. And the only thing I'm guilty of is wanting her back so desperately I want to scream," Emma said, tears welling up in her eyes.

The woman actually seemed to smile. "Okay. Just a few more questions."

Emma wiped at her eyes and sat down obediently.

"Do you know anything about Cleo's 'strange' behaviour?"

Emma gulped. She knew exactly what the woman meant by strange. But instead, she shook her head, "No."

Rikki was ready to kill the man sitting before her. The only thing that stopped her was the fact that he looked utterly terrified.

"I did not hurt Cleo, and I would never take her away from her family," She said slowly, so this idiot man could understand. "She was my best friend. She... she is my best friend," She whispered.

"Okay..." The man looked over the paper pad in his hands. "And I think that's it."

Rikki stood up abruptly and hurried to the door.

"Oh! There's one more question!"

Slam! She was gone.

Rikki strutted angrily over to the interrogation room Emma was in and opened the door, stopping the policewoman in mid-sentence.

"Come on, Emma. We're leaving." She said, gesturing for them to go.

Emma nodded and stood up.

"You can't do that, we still have more questions," The woman said quickly.

Rikki glared at the woman. "Listen here. I have been accused of kidnapping and hurting my best friend. I am not going to stay here and take that! Now come on, Emma! We're leaving!"

The policewoman stared; open mouthed as the two teens left the room, officially besting her.

Rikki and Emma stopped by Bella's room and collected her too, and the three girls ran out of the station together.

They hugged; glad to be out of that awful place where they were seen as criminals, not innocents.

Bella, with tears in her eyes, said, "What are we going to do?"

* * *

><p>Cleo rounded a corner, panting heavily. Only after five minutes of listening did she dare to see if the footsteps were gone. I don't see anyone.

She breathed a sigh of relief and started walking as fast as she could away from the building. It looks like I'll have to find Lewis tomorrow..._

She retreated back to her cave, much discouraged. She leant against the rock walls, huddled in a blanket, her anxiety finally subsiding as she drifted off to sleep...

8. Chapter 8

_June 21__st_

Cleo opened her eyes groggily to find no light beating down on her, much to her surprise. She got up, ruffling her hair. She peeked out of her cave. It was dark out. Then what had woken her up?

She just sighed and put it down to anxiety. She grabbed her bag and headed out of the cavern; a starlit walk sounded pretty good right now. She walked across the soft sand, the wind blowing in her hair. She looked up to the star filled sky. There's no moon out,_ she

thought idly.

She ran a brush through her hair and plaited it, just so it was out of the way. She looked out to the dark sea, reflecting the stars. She smiled as it churned, climbing up the sand. She walked up to the waters' edge and sighed as the liquid ran over her toes, ignoring the fact that she fell face first into the surf seconds later. She let the air dry her off and walked back into the cave.

She wrapped her dark blue blanket around her and closed her eyes, succumbing to her weariness.

Cleo awoke with a jolt. She looked around. Where had that noise come from? She checked her phone " which she had by then changed to American time. _8 AM. That's not too bad._ She thought with a shrug.

Ding!

There it was again. After ten minutes of searching and five more dings, Cleo finally realised that the noise was coming from Lewis's laptop.

She rubbed her eyes and picked it up, flicking her messy slept-in braid over her shoulder. She opened up the laptop and squinted at the little notification shining on the screen.

Cleo's birthday.

What? Cleo thought confusedly. _It's not my birthday!_ She frowned at the screen for another five minutes before doing a little calculation in her head.

She frowned. _Could it be my birthday and I haven't realised?_ She scrambled over to her phone and turned it on. _June 21st._

"I forgot!" She cried in horror, "I forgot my own nineteenth birthday!" She sat down, dazed.

She fingered her messy plait. "Wow, I'm nineteen..." She murmured.

She shook herself. She didn't feel any different, so there wasn't any need to fuss over it. Her top priority needed to be Lewis.

Regardless, Cleo took a trip into town. She decided to buy herself something nice, because it was her birthday, after all " and she needed a little assurance that she wasn't turning into Rikki. Maybe a T-shirt? A new phone cover? A hairband? Cleo walked into a pleasantly red and green themed store.

"Hello? Can I help you?" A woman in her thirties said from the counter. She wore a red t-shirt and green cut off jeans, and her hair was a nice brown, cut just above her shoulders.

"Oh, I'm just looking," Cleo replied.

"Anything in particular?"

Cleo turned to the woman with a sweet smile. "Just something little," She said.

"Perhaps a bracelet or necklace?" The woman questioned. "Oh, no matter. I see you already have a necklace. It's beautiful. May I have a look?" She asked.

Cleo fiddled with her locket for a second before hesitantly handing it over.

"Oh my, it is beautiful." The woman said, opening Cleo's locket and closing it again. "Where did you find it?"

Cleo opened and shut her mouth like a goldfish. She couldn't just say _'oh, my mermaid friend found it at the bottom of a magical moon pool,'_ now could she?

Cleo gave the woman a weak smile. "A friend gave it to me," She said. That was truthful enough.

"Ah," The woman said, handing Cleo back her locket. She quickly refastened it around her neck, glad to have it back where it belonged.

Cleo turned away from the woman and continued looking at all of the items on offer.

In the end Cleo just bought a headband. It was very beautiful, blue with intricate swirling patterns on it.

"Is that all?" The woman asked as the purchase went through.

"Yes, thank you," Cleo said with a smile and went out the door. She walked back to her cave, the headband dangling in her hand.

Cleo decided she was going to check out that building again. She was almost sure Lewis was in there, so she needed to go back as soon as possible.

Cleo brushed her hair out and retied it up in a plait. She placed her headband and brush up onto a shelf of rock that jutted out from the wall. She walked out of the cave, grabbing her bag. She walked all the way back up to Sovereign Street and lay in wait.

* * *

><p>Cleo yawned. She wished she'd brought a book. Okay, she decided. _Staying here isn't going to accomplish much. _So she ventured out of her shadowy spot. If she got caught again, so be it.

She ran out of her hiding spot, glad for the shadows to slip into. She found herself in some sort of hallway, except it was large, and had about six rooms scattered throughout it. _Maybe Lewis is in one of these? _Cleo thought uncertainly. She knew if she made a mistake she could be in big trouble. She wavered; she didn't know what to do. The hallway was clear " now that she looked at it, it seemed more like a room " of any life.

Cleo was about to step out, when a man walked into the empty room.

She muttered under her breath and ducked back into hiding.

The man " he was dressed casually, not in any sort of uniform or work clothing, as Cleo had expected " opened a door at random and tossed a tray into it. Cleo could hear the faint sound of it clattering to the floor.

"Here's your food, good for nothing." The man said, rolling his eyes and sealing the door shut before walking off, the key deep in his pocket.

Cleo frowned. Was there someone else here besides Lewis? Whoever it was, she needed to help them. She couldn't just leave someone to be held captive and treated like this by these monsters.

Cleo looked around cautiously, making sure no one was about to come out any time soon. She slowly crept out of the corner of the room, making sure to stay in the shadows. Cleo crept up to the door " but she knew it was locked. She had seen the man use a key to open it.

Cleo's curiosity got the better of her, and before she made any attempt of rescuing this person, she just wanted to see what they looked like. There was a window at the front of the door, one you could pull back and cover at your will. Cleo tugged back the cover curiously.

She gasped.

There, in the corner of the room, was a huddled up figure. A figure she knew well.

Lewis?

"Lewis!" She whispered. He didn't look up " he must have been sleeping.

Cleo frowned and pulled a pin out of her hair. She had no idea if it would work on the lock " it always did in the movies " but she tried regardless. She stuck the black pin in the lock and twisted and pulled.

Suddenly, she heard footsteps behind her.

_Oh no.___

>

>Cleo whipped around to see a man behind her, looking rather alarmed.<p>

_He has a gun.___

Cleo ducked out of the way as the man raised his weapon.

_Wait a second, that doesn't look like any gun I've seen before...__

>

>Cleo's twisted out of the way as the man fired another shot.<p>

Her third attempt wasn't so lucky. The shot hit her in the shoulder, but it felt cold, not searing and painful as she had expected.

Cleo fell to the ground, suddenly extremely drowsy.

"What have you done to me?" She murmured sluggishly, reaching up to her shoulder and seeing something green, mixed with only a little bit of blood.

The man leaned over her as Cleo's fatigue worsened.

"Well, at least we know how this works on mermaids now..."

The man's murmur was the last thing Cleo heard before everything went black...

* * *

><p>Cleo woke up in a dark room, her head pounding.<p>

Ugh. What happened? She thought as she pushed herself up. _Right. That man shot me._

She got up slowly, clutching the wall as everything spun. She reached for her shoulder. It was bandaged, but it didn't hurt at all. _That wasn't a bullet._

She walked to the door and started banging on it. "Hey! Let me out!" She yelled, "Someone get me out of here!"

She screamed and pounded for another fifteen minutes, but no one came. She was beginning to suspect no one would.

She huddled up in the corner, shivering. It was cold, but there was no source of water for her to use her powers on to try and even attempt to free herself. She pulled the hood of her jacket over her head and rubbed her legs to try and warm herself up. Strange. The ground was damp, but there was no water.

Cleo soon fell asleep, in a futile attempt to get away from the fear and the cold.

She woke up sometime later, sprawled across the ground. She got up and tried banging at the door again. When she again got no response, she sat on the ground, extremely discouraged.

She wiped at her eyes. _I don't want to be stuck here forever! I still need to rescue Lewis!_

She hugged her legs to her chest and rocked back and forth. She buried her head into her knees and cried.

She hopped up and traced the wall, searching for any source of water she could use. Nothing. She sniffed and slammed her fists against the walls.

"So you're awake!"

Cleo whipped around to see a curious face peering through the window of the door. Cleo raced up to the figure.

"Let me out!" She screamed, "You have to let me out!"

The man " Cleo realised this fact after she stopped screaming " shook his head. "Sorry, no can do." He said.

Cleo glared at him. He seemed so easy going. So _casual._ She was being held against her will! How dare he be nonchalant!

"I can see you're angry," He chuckled. "Exactly why we gave you no water."

Cleo frowned. Okay, so they knew about her powers. That she figured. But she wasn't expecting him to be so up-front about it.

"Are you letting me out or not?" Cleo scowled, being sure not to let out the fact that inside she was trembling.

"We will soon,"

Cleo raised an eyebrow. She kicked hard at the door, making the man jump back.

"You're a feisty one," He laughed.

Cleo glared at him. _If only I had some water, he'd be so dead..._

"So, how do you live with being a mermaid?"

Cleo scowled at the man. "I'm not telling you anything," She spat.

"Ah, you're smart too."

Cleo stared at the man venomously. She wondered if she could manage to punch him through that small window...

"So, when were you going to let me out?" Cleo asked. She could play peaceful if it would get her information.

"Soon."

"Yes. Very specific." She said bitterly. She started pacing around the room, running her hands through her hair.

The man suddenly looked behind him and talked to someone. He looked back at Cleo. "Okay. We're ready to let you out now."

Cleo looked around and backtracked to the end of the room as three men came into the small room.

They grabbed her by the arms and took her out while she struggled.

"Where are you taking me? Put me down!" She demanded, trying to squirm away from the two men who were carrying her.

All of a sudden she was put down, and she dusted herself off, looking for any chance of escape.

"Is she coming?" One of the men asked his companion.

He nodded.

"Wait, what?" Cleo asked, getting a little frightened. "Who's she?"
Oh _no, Denman? Please tell me it's not Denman. I thought we
tricked her!_

Fear got the best of her and a fierce wind started up, bewildering
all the guards.

Little did they know, this was Cleo's doing. She started backing
away, making sure to keep her power constant.

Unfortunately, one of them caught sight of what she was doing.

"It's her! She's doing it! _Grab her!_" He yelled.

Cleo broke into a sprint, scrambling out of the building and losing
track of the guards.

She ran all the way back to her cavern, never faltering for a second.
_Happy birthday to me...__
>

9. Chapter 9

_ "Lewis!" Cleo squealed, reaching out blindly._

_ "I'm still here," He murmured, grabbing for her hand._

_ "Where are we? Surely you can tell me!" She insisted._

_ "Surely I can tell you?" Lewis laughed, "Come on Cleo, what do you
think the blindfold's for?" He asked._

_ "Well... I dunno, you are kinda weird." Cleo grinned
sheepishly._

_ "Just keep walking..." _

_Cleo let out a loud shriek as she stumbled over another rock. Lewis
caught her just before she toppled, holding her securely in his
arms._

_ "See? I told you I shouldn't be blindfolded!" Cleo cried
playfully._

_ "Do you want to ruin the surprise?" Lewis asked._
>
__Cleo thought for a moment, almost stumbling over a tree
root as she did so. "No, but I do wish you'd tell me. How much
longer?"_

_ "It's not far. Man you're impatient," Lewis muttered._

_ "I may be blindfolded but I can still hear!"_

_ "Okay, okay... I'm sorry, you're not impatient." He paused. "No,
that's lying. I can't do that."_

She shoved him hard in the shoulder, causing him to lose his hold on her and herself to quite nearly fall flat on her face again.

"I've warned you not to do that," Lewis chided with a hint of amusement in his voice as his hand gripped her shoulder again.

"Is there any water nearby?"

"No; why?" Lewis asked, puzzled.

"Because you're about to get a tsunami."

Lewis laughed. "You have to be the funniest person I've ever encountered," He said sarcastically.

"I know, right?"

Lewis rolled his eyes, but the action was lost, seeing as his girlfriend was blindfolded. "You ever heard of sarcasm, Cleo? Or modesty for that matter?"

"That's rich, coming from Mr. Self Indulged." Cleo snorted.

"What? What? I wasn't aware Zane was following us!"

Cleo burst into giggles. "Okay," She said, recovering, "That may have been a little funny. No getting a big head now," She chided.

Lewis grinned. "I'll try not to,"

"I thought you said it wasn't that much longer?"

"I did; you just haven't realised the feats of your impatience." Lewis remarked.

"You're so mean!" Cleo pouted.

"Brilliant comeback, Cleo." He said sarcastically.

"I stand by my remark." She said huffily.

Lewis laughed. "Okay, we're almost there..."

"Ooh! What's my surprise? Can I know now?" Cleo asked happily, forgetting the irritation she had felt towards Lewis only seconds ago.

"No you can't. Wouldn't that defeat all the secrecy?" Lewis laughed, "You really are absurd."

>
"Am not!" Cleo retorted.

"Are too." Lewis answered just as childishly.

"You know, you â€""_

_Lewis cut Cleo off. "Okay, just a few more steps..." __Cleo did as she was told and Lewis pulled off the blindfold covering her hazel green eyes._

Cleo gasped as she took in the clearing. It was gorgeous in itself, but in the middle of it was the most beautiful crystal clear water Cleo had ever laid eyes on.

She turned to him, her hazel green eyes glistening with tears. "You were lying about the water."

Lewis rolled his eyes. "Come on, that's what you're gonna focus on now? You really are â€""_

She silenced him with a kiss.

Cleo awoke with a jolt. For just a moment, she didn't know where she was; until she registered that she was in her cave and the mid morning light was spilling over her huddled figure. Cleo pressed her hand to her temples, letting everything come into focus. It had been a few days since she had been caught at Sovereign Street, on her nineteenth birthday, and since then she had gotten little information.

Cleo stood up and tripped over her bag in the process. She groaned and dusted off the dirt from her hands, throwing her bag into the corner of the cave. She opened up Lewis's laptop, planning on doing a little more research on this 74th Sovereign Street.

She strummed her fingers against the keyboard as she waited for the machine to start up. She sighed. She knew that it would be so much harder to rescue Lewis now that they knew who she was and what she looked like. She just shook her head and opened up the Internet, typing what she wanted into the search browser. What was done was done. She couldn't change it now.

Cleo peered at the screen with interest. Apparently 74th Sovereign Street had been some sort of warehouse, but had been shut down many years earlier. That would explain the faded numbers. Cleo searched for records of new management, but couldn't find any. _Huh. Whoever these people are, they must have wanted to keep their purchase secret. I can't find anything anywhere._

The inside of the building, when she had been there the other day, had been rather done up. _Maybe someone wanted it to make it look run down from the outside so it wouldn't look suspicious. Then they made a sort of headquarters on the inside, maybe? _She speculated. _Whoa. I'm thinking through this a little fast. Maybe I should slow down._

She ran her fingers through her hair and let out a long sigh. _Okay_, she thought. _I should just review what I do know._

_They know who I am and what I look like. They have some sort of mermaid tranquilliser. Now that I've been there and know where Lewis is they'll have undoubtedly changed his room... oh dear, that doesn't sound very positive... _she thought unhappily.

She ran her fingers through her hair and walked out of her cave, deciding that she probably wasn't going to find out much about this fortress without actually going there herself. She walked out onto the beach, the sand shining like a brilliant golden floor in the intense sunlight.

Stray joggers and families were scattered across the sand, or just the odd wanderer. Cleo ventured into town, rubbing her eyes. _Oh how good it would be to have a bed again... _she thought, for a moment envious of her friends back home.

She received a sudden burst of clarity and raced into a nearby store. She walked out with a navy blue shoulder bag â€" much like the school bag she used to own. It was at least as large as her current backpack â€" if not bigger â€" and it would be much easier to handle than the one she had now â€" or at least it wouldn't keep falling off. It would also blend in well with the shadows of 74th Sovereign Street. _I really should find a name for that,_ she thought idly.

She returned to her cave and swapped the bags. After putting in her flashlight, she tossed the now empty black backpack to the corner of the cave.

"Okay, I think that's everything," She muttered to herself. She yawned and ruffled her hair. She set her bag down on the ground and huddled up against the cave wall, wrapping her blanket around her.

Cleo awoke again a few hours later. She got up and stretched, yawning. She ruffled her hair, moving about sluggishly. _I should probably do some further investigation on... I really do need to find a name for it... _she thought.

She rubbed at her eyes and grabbed her new bag. She brushed her hair and tied it up, before walking out of the cave, shading her eyes from the sunlight. _What should I call it?_ She mused, _Sovereign? Sovereign building? 74th Building? The fortress? These names aren't very creative._

She plonked down at a nearby bench and allowed her mind space to wander. _Hm,_ she thought, for the first time thinking about it seriously. She was unable to come up with anything.

Before she knew it, she was asleep.

She awoke sometime later, and the sky had turned to a beautiful pink. She stretched, yawning. _I do seem to be falling into a habit, don't I? _She thought dryly. _Ah well, perhaps more sleep shall aid me in the forces of logical decisions,_ she thought, remembering her not exactly ideal run in with a guard a few days prior.

Which had ultimately resulted in her capture.

She just shook her head and, standing, leant against the wall, taking a breath. She set out for her cave. _I should like to arrive before sunset,_ she thought, _before the city is plunged into darkness and I find myself hopelessly lost because I was stupid enough to forget my flashlight._

She soon found the pavement morphing into grainy sand, and from then on she knew exactly where she was, even if the city were to be spontaneously shrouded in darkness.

She huddled up in a blanket and promptly fell asleep, despite retaining the feeling of being quite well rested.

She woke to the sounds of waves slowly slicing into her subconscious. She took a moment to just lay there in the dappled sunlight that was fighting it's way to reach her. But she soon got up, once again with that firm thought of having no time to waste, despite the fact that she had been having a marvellous time with an absolutely unproductive last couple of days.

She walked out into town with the intent of snooping a little more around this... fortress. She tied her hair up and slid her sunglasses on, as the sun was quite harsh today.

Something caught her eye, and she stopped. _What was that?_ She looked around. _A trick of the light?_ She shrugged and kept moving. She saw it again. _Okay, now I know something's up._

>

>She looked around earnestly, while the hot sun beat down on her. A sinister hissing came from behind her. She whipped around. A black and brown striped cat made a run for her, snarling and spitting. Cleo jumped back in fright.<p>

To her surprise, the cat narrowly missed her, barrelling for the underside of a house for a rat or some other small animal, no doubt. Cleo winced at the angry scratch marks the cat had inflicted upon her while making a mad dash for whatever helpless creature was to be it's breakfast.

She opened her bag, the velcro splitting apart with a satisfying _rip_, _and dabbed at her new wound with a tissue. Soon the tissue was soaked with blood, so she threw it into a nearby bin. Cleo looked down at her leg. The cat had clawed just above her ankle, rather deep â€" it would need a rather large bandaid, or perhaps even a bandage. Luckily, Cleo had come prepared for circumstances like these.

She took out three packs of bandaids. One regular, one bigger than usual, and one huge â€" heavy duty, that's what it's name was. Cleo looked down at her leg and then picked the biggest one. It was quite a large wound site. She slapped the bandaid on, throwing the wrapper into the bin mentioned earlier. She ventured forth. It hurt to walk, even doing so gingerly, but she would just have to be careful.

She looked around. _I must've turned a wrong corner, _she thought. _I don't recognise this neighbourhood. _And she didn't. It looked like a fairly rich part of town, mini malls everywhere, showing off TV's and what was no doubt the latest and hottest fashion in Boston.

_Then where did the cat come from? Maybe it belongs to one of the owners and got out somehow, _she thought wonderingly. _But it didn't have a collar. And it looked pretty 'street cat' to me. I don't know if you can tell those things by looking._

She continued to wonder about this presumably stray cat that had attacked her. _And that's something. Wouldn't a trained cat have learned not to attack people? Or perhaps it was rescued, had escaped, and was reverting back to it's old self? Oh, the dramatic life of a cat is too much for me. I thought being a mermaid was hard._

She frowned as she looked around the buildings that she was now in the midst of. _I'm definitely going the wrong way, _she thought. _I should probably turn back._

She pivoted on her heel and started walking in the opposite direction. She was walking past a store displaying various wide screen TV's, when she stopped dead in her tracks. She turned. She saw someone. Someone eerily familiar.

Herself.

"This eighteen year old girl, Cleo Sertori, went missing approximately three weeks ago, and a full out police investigation had been launched into her whereabouts. Friends and family describe her as cheery and honest, with dark brown hair and hazel green eyes. Please, if anyone has seen this girl, let us know." A reporter said, his face grim and bleary.

Next there was a picture of her, smiling, presumably taken by one of her friends. She barely had time to register her amazement, when Rikki, Emma, and Bella's faces popped up on the screen.

"Cleo is our best friend, we just want her back," Rikki said in a shaky voice. Guilt rippled through Cleo's body. Rikki never cried, but now there were tears falling freely.

"Cleo, if you can see this, please, come home." Bella said in an almost whisper.

Cleo couldn't bear to look anymore. The reporter went into a monologue about how Cleo was a big part of the community, and her presence was noticed and missed. Cleo walked away, feeling an overwhelming sense of hatred with herself. She finally realised just what she'd done to her friends. They had looked a wreck on television, and she could only imagine how they were by themselves, alone with their grief.

Then it struck her how bad the situation had just become. _Oh no. _She thought, breaking out into a sprint.

If my story has reached America, going into the open won't be a choice for me now. I'll have to hide.

She ran as fast as she could back to the cove, pulling her jacket over her head. _Things will be even harder for me now._

10. Chapter 10

It was strange how quickly things could change. This morning, she had been fantasising about a runaway cat. And now she was hiding away in a desolate cave tucked away in a corner of a barely populated beach, her body wracked with shivers.

It's so cold, she thought, tucking her blanket closer around her, though it could have been a paper sheet for all the warmth it gave her. _It's too dangerous to go out anymore. But it's too cold not to._

>

>With her privileges of sun seeking walks during the day, she hadn't realised how cold her cave could get. And it wasn't even sunny now â€" it was a biting cold, with a raging wind that was one degree away from becoming a snowstorm. Lewis always complained about American

winters, she thought, shuddering with the cold. _Now I know why._

It was strange. It had been lovely and sunny when she first got here, but now it was as if nature overheard her bad news and was testing her limits. _I should have known to check the season before I came here, _she thought bitterly. _Oh, who am I kidding. I would have come anyway._

In addition to the piercing cold, she was also getting cabin fever. _How you can get that in a cave, I'm not sure._ She thought humourlessly.

A drop of water fell onto her nose, transforming her. She let out a growl of irritation. Now that nature had decided to turn things around on her, the cave was damp and dripped everywhere. She was beginning to get used to the unexpected tails.

As another drop landed on her, this time on her forearm, she decided she couldn't take it anymore. She grabbed her bag and marched out into the windstorm. She was going to find Lewis, recognisable or not.

The next morning...

>

>"Why was Cleo so scared of water?"<p>

Rikki was determined that this time she would punch Cleo's little sister in the face. Emma held her back.

"Kim, she was hydrophobic," Emma said in an almost pleading manner. She didn't want to go through this again.

Kim had become a meddling little ghoul after Cleo's disappearance. She kept asking uncomfortable questions, like why Cleo was scared of the water, why she was so secretive, why the four of them would always sneak off all the time. It was the girl's dark-rimmed eyes and skinny figure that kept Emma herself from tackling Kim.

Cleo's younger sibling had been having a horrible time without the older girl â€" she hadn't been eating well and was having nightmares â€" but that didn't make her any less of a pain in the neck. After Cleo fled, she had probably become _more_ annoying, _more_ unpleasant.

Bella always said it was because she missed Cleo. Rikki didn't believe her.

Emma pushed Rikki back, to prevent her from tearing the girl's head off. "Kim. I know you miss Cleo â€" " She started.

"I'm fine without her," Kim said, but her bottom lip was trembling. Tears started welling up in her eyes, and she ran away.

She always did that. When she started to show signs of missing Cleo and being more than just a nosy brat, she ran.

Emma sighed and turned back to her two friends, her gaze directed at Rikki. "You shouldn't be so hard on her. She's just a kid."

"Yes, a painfully annoying kid!" Rikki said, throwing her hands up in frustration. She rubbed at her face and, seeming to calm down, said, "She asks too many questions."

"That we agree on," Bella said, massaging her temple. "But you make it sound so ominous. Like we'll have to hurt her if she doesn't stop." She joked, trying to lighten the mood.

Rikki's hand flung up in the air. "I vote for that! Who's with me?"

This earned her two very unimpressed looks.

"Well then what are we gonna do?" She said huffily, folding her arms over her front.

Emma bit her lip. She was at a loss. "I don't know,"

Bella shrugged. "Me neither."

Rikki looked incredulous. "Come on! We have to do something!"

Emma looked at her, face firm. "Rikki. They just lost their daughter. They have the right to ask questions."

Rikki walked into the living room and flopped down on the sofa, burying her face in the cushions. She sighed and turned back around.

They had been spending almost all their time at the Sertori residence, now that Cleo had gone missing. They tried their hardest to console Cleo's family, and being with people who were grieving just as much as they were was a small comfort.

"But it's not just Kim, is it?" Rikki said, sitting up. "It's the whole family. Now Cleo's gone, it's like they've suddenly realised all the flaws in their relationships with her."

The three sat in an uncomfortable silence. They knew Rikki was right. What they were going to do about it, they didn't know.

Don walked into the room, his eyes narrowing when he saw the three troubled mermaids. "Girls, what's wrong?"

Emma stood, plastering a fake smile on her face. "Nothing, Mr Sertori. Nothing at all." She said.

"Okay..." He said suspiciously, sitting down next to Bella on the couch.

He buried his face in his hands, his heart twanging with the memory of his daughter. "Girls, why was Cleo so closed in?" He asked suddenly.

Rikki discreetly pulled at her hair, her eyes flashing with urgency. "She wasn't closed in," She said through gritted teeth. She wanted to say, she wasn't closed in, _you people are just too stupidly meddling,_ but she refrained at Emma's stern glare.

"Mr Sertori," Bella said, stepping in. "Cleo had been having a rough

couple of years. With Lewis leaving and all," She said with a practiced shrug of her shoulders.

Emma silently thanked Bella for coming up with a lie that was convincing enough for Cleo's father to believe. After all, Cleo had missed Lewis dearly after his departure to America, but that of course wasn't the complete reason to why she acted the way she did.

He buried his head in his hands and sighed. Bella had to refrain from extending a hand and petting him on the shoulder " but he didn't need patronisation at a time like this.

Emma stood, her gaze fixed on the beautiful day outside. It was summer, despite having some chilly days " or that may just have been a reflection of their grief. She twisted her fingers " a hobby, she thought with a smile, that she had gotten from Cleo.

"We'll be leaving now, Mr Sertori," She said, grabbing Rikki's arm. Rikki stood accordingly.

Don didn't answer; just nodded.

Bella looked up at Emma curiously, but stood anyways.

As soon as they were out the door, Emma kicked at a rubbish can, screaming.

"Whoa whoa, Em." Rikki and Bella rushed over to calm her down. "What's up?"

Emma flopped onto a bench and cried.

"Emma!" Bella gasped, surprised at this outburst of vulnerability, "Why are you crying?" She asked, sitting down with her.

Emma sobbed and tucked her knees up to her chest. "I don't know what to do," She choked out. "People always say I'm the levelheaded of the four of us, but I'm not. Cleo was. She kept us sane. I don't know what we're going to do without her!" She cried.

Bella wrapped an arm around her and said nothing.

"They're asking too many questions," Emma continued. "Bella, they're going to find out something! And what then? Do you think they'll be kind?" She paused.

"They've just lost their daughter and their lives are a whirlwind of grief. They'll believe she ran away because of the secret, and who do you think they'll take it out on? The other mermaids!" Emma sobbed.

"They won't keep our secret," She said softly. "They'll just see it as a reason to destroy us. They'll see _us _as the reason their daughter fled from them!"

Rikki sat on the other side of Emma, letting out a long sigh. They all knew that Emma was right, but putting it so plainly made it just that more frightening.

"Let's go to my house," Bella said, standing. "We can sort all this out there."

Bella had a humble home. Not too flashy, just cosy and comfortable. Emma liked it extremely – despite taking to rearranging the flower vases every time she visited.

Emma picked at today's sunflowers and admired her handiwork. "There. That's better." She said happily, dusting the pollen off her hands and into the bin. Mustn't get pollen on the carpet.

"I'd imagine my mother takes quite an offence to your rearranging her flowers," Bella said. "Apart from that I think she adores you."

"I'm sorry, but your mother simply doesn't appreciate the art of how to place a tulip," Emma smiled.

"Enough with the flower talk!" Rikki snapped, "Can we get onto our lives being on the brink of disaster now?"

"Yes, of course," Emma said sarcastically, pulling out a chair for herself. "That always was my favourite topic."

Rikki huffed and sat down at the old wooden table with a thump.

Bella sat, fingering her crystal anxiously. "We're panicking," She said.

Emma looked at her in confusion. "What?"

"We're panicking." Bella said again. "We can't help it. We've kept this secret too long to let it fall into the hands of grief-ridden meddlers."

"Gee, thanks for clarifying that Ms. Obvious," Rikki said sarcastically, "The question is: what are we gonna do about it?"

"I don't know," Bella said defeatedly.

"It would be better if it was just Kim," Emma sighed, "But it's the whole family. Kim, Don and Sam."

"And I can't imagine what'll happen when Bev comes back to town," Rikki groaned, cradling her head in her hands.

"Beverly? Cleo's mother?" Bella asked.

"Yeah," Emma nodded. "She moved out of town when Cleo's parents divorced, but she's coming back because of the disappearance."

"And no doubt bringing her new boyfriend with her," Rikki companied, "So we'll not only have mermaid drama to deal with, but family problems as well!"

"Oh _no._" Bella groaned, banging her head on the table. She knew family troubles could be painful. Her parents were divorced, and every third week Bella's father turned up on their doorstep, usually with his new girlfriend at his side. She dreaded the visits.

"Bella dearie, don't bang your head on the table like that," Her mother came flouncing into the room, wearing a red button up shirt and a light blue apron. "You'll get awful bruises."

She was a rather beautiful woman, with shoulder length golden hair, dazzling blue eyes and a soft voice. The way she sounded and looked made her seem a lot younger than she was.

"Mother," Bella said, standing. "Of course. I know that." She said, hugging her mother who was barely taller than her.

"Oh, and the darling Emma," Her mother said, hurrying over to the turquoise vase on the kitchen counter. "I see you've been fiddling with my flowers again, hmm?"

Emma blushed. "My apologies, Mrs Hartley."

"It's quite alright," She said, still frowning at the prospect that her precious sunflowers had been tampered with. She turned, finally finished with undoing all of Emma's work. "How are you girls today?"

"Good," Rikki said, scraping at the wood of the table.

"We're fine, thank you Mrs Hartley," Emma murmured, a frown twitching at her lips. _How could we ever be fine without Cleo?_

"Good, good," Bella's mother murmured and scampered out to the kitchen where the clanging of pots and pans commenced.

"I'm going to my bedroom," Bella sighed, standing. She trudged up the stairs, Emma and Rikki close on her heels.

The emerald door closed with a slam. Bella pulled at her hair anxiously, flitting around the room, opening the windows and fiddling with the brightly coloured vases her mother had placed around the room.

Rikki sat on the faded yellow bed, tucking her feet underneath her.

Emma looked out the window, staring at the beautiful day outside. Her phone started ringing, the shrill screech bringing them out of their individual trances.

Emma looked down at the screen, her blue eyes hazy with grief. "My mother wants me back for lunch." She turned. "She's on edge after Cleo left. She has this insane idea that someone's targeting teenage girls."

"After one disappearance?" Rikki inquired, cocking her head like a parakeet.

Emma shrugged. "She's melodramatic," She walked out of the door, saying, "I guess with good reason."

Emma ran her hands against the cement of a rundown old building. She always took the longer way home now, the one which gave her a glimpse of the waterfront and the one which allowed Cleo's house to have more

view time than the old route. Emma liked to think on these walks.

What I'm thinking is insane, she thought regretfully. _But_ perhaps a little insanity is good at a time like this._

_Or perhaps it's not so insane. Just because Bella and Rikki would hang me for it doesn't mean it's wrong. Maybe they're the melodramatic ones.__

>

>Oh, who am I kidding. She wouldn't even answer. She's made it pretty clear she wants nothing to do with us.

Emma turned the handle to her home. I should at least try. Cleo's not the only one who can be stubborn. She walked up to her bedroom and sat on the bed. _Bella and Rikki wouldn't like my doing this without them._

_But they'd try, they'd plead, for her to come home. I won't do that. I won't, no matter how much I want to. I just need to call her and tell her what's going on.__

>

>She rolled on her stomach and grabbed her phone. She dialled an infinitely familiar number.<p>

_Meanwhile, In America...__

>

>Cleo edged closer to the two guards who were engaging in a conversation.<p>

"That idiot boy, I don't know why we still keep him here," One of them said.

"He has information." Replied the other offhandedly.

"And that lady companion of his," The other scoffed, "We had to change his room just because she showed up."

"Moving a boy only three â€" "

Cleo's phone burst into song.

"What's that?" One of them asked, bewildered.

"No no no. Not now!" Cleo hissed under her breath, trying to silence her phone. But it was too late. She fled from the scene, lucky that the guards hadn't seen her. _I was so close,_ she thought disappointedly. _So close!_

She looked down at the screen, which flashed with a sort of urgency. _One missed call from Emma.__

>

>Cleo pinched the bridge of her nose, dialled the number, and held the phone up to her ear. "Hello?"<p>

"Cleo!"

"Emma, if you're about to convince me into coming back â€" " Cleo started.

"No. I just want to speak with you." Emma replied.

Cleo flopped down on a bench and sighed. The horrible weather had given way to a pink sunset. She suspected Emma's offer was some sort of trap, but didn't especially care at the moment. She felt as though she could do with some consoling.

"Fine. Talk."

"Good," Emma sighed in relief, "There's so much going on."

"Yeah," Cleo said, rubbing at her feet which were sore from running, "I know the feeling."

"Your family has to be pretty high on the list though," Emma said.

"My family?" Cleo sat up. "Why my family?"

"They're just asking loads of questions and getting really suspicious. Your mother's coming back in a week."

"My mother?" Cleo repeated dumbly. "Why is my mother there?"

"You just got kidnapped! Why d'you think your mum's there?"

"Oh. Right." Cleo said numbly. Her mother. She hadn't seen her mother in... well, it was safe to say a while.

"She's bringing that good for nothing boyfriend of hers." Said Emma sadly.

"Oh no," Cleo moaned. "That is guaranteed to end in tears."

"Tell me about it. Kim misses you," Emma offered.

"Are you kidding me? Little Miss too-regal-to-join-the-rest-of-humanity misses _me?_" Cleo asked, incredulous.

"She does. She asks about you nearly three times every day,"

"That's sweet... I guess." Cleo said warily.

"Rikki feeds your fish."

"Ah yes," Cleo said. "It's nice to know that it takes my spontaneous disappearance for her to do as I ask," She laughed.

"Try to set the bar a little lower next time," Emma suggested.

"Emma," Cleo said.

"Yeah?"

"Be extremely careful around my family," She said. Cleo was very apprehensive. "They know how to get answers."

"Especially when driven by grief," Emma put in with a sigh.

"They won't stop," Cleo warned. "Be very wary."

"Will do," Emma replied. "Cleo, I'm really sorry, but I've got to go."

"Sure thing. It was good to talk to you again," Cleo smiled.

"You too. Bye."

Cleo pocketed her phone and stood. She wandered back to her cave for the night, hoping Emma would take her warning to heart.

11. Chapter 11

Cleo's hands flew fast across the keyboard. She had gotten no other calls from Emma, and didn't expect to, so she had gone back to trying to find out as much about this fortress and the people holding Lewis against his will.

Today was a great deal less cold, and for that she was grateful. She just needed to wear a jacket, instead of being huddled up in her blanket like the day before.

I'm still coming up with nothing, she thought. How discouraging.
She pushed the keyboard away from her and stood up.

She gathered her hair into a bun, grabbed her bag and emerged into the daylight.

She pulled at her wrinkled clothes and started off for Sovereign Street. She was at the ominous building in no time, having completely memorised the route without really meaning to.

She snuck in through a broken window, her light blue top snagging on a shard of broken glass. She winced as the sharp fragment spilt through her t-shirt and scratched against her skin. She dropped to the floor.

She pushed herself against the wall and examined her injury. A deep red stain was spreading across her top, and she gasped against the sudden pain. But she couldn't stop now. She forced herself up and kept going.

Lately she had been spying on the 'guards' scattered throughout the abandoned building, hoping to overhear something about Lewis's whereabouts.

She crept around the wall, hearing voices.

"I can't believe we had to move that idiot boy," One said. "I mean, he hasn't been a help so far. And she's only a girl, it's not like she can really do anything! I don't know why we didn't just kill him."

Cleo bit back tears at this comment.

"Don't be so irritable. We only moved him three floors down. No biggie."

Cleo's eyes widened. _Three floors down? Is that where he is?_

She didn't wait to hear any more. She thundered down the steps and stopped at the floor Lewis used to be on. _Three floors down. That's easy enough._

She raced down three more flights of stairs and stopped at the right floor. A guard walked past, so she quickly scrambled into a hiding place. She peeked around the wall.

The hallway was deserted, except for one room in the middle. In front of it were dozens of guards. _This has to be it,_ she thought. _What else would be so heavily guarded?_

She snuck out further and listened intently. She didn't want to run in there without knowing if it really was Lewis that was in that room.

"Look at this," A guard said, turning around a little leather notebook in his hands, "Property of Lewis McCartney. That's the kid in there, isn't it?"

Another nodded distractedly. "Yup. That's him alright."

Cleo felt lightheaded. _It's him!_ She thought. _It's him it's him it's him it's him it's him it's him!_

Suddenly, the guards started to disperse. She had no idea why â€" but this was her chance. As soon as all of them were gone, she raced to the door, shaking with anticipation.

She heard footsteps behind her. She jumped away from the handle as though it were on fire and ran back to the safety of the shadows.

A woman swept into view, opening and closing the door behind her so quickly Cleo couldn't possibly get a good look at her.

She almost screamed in frustration. _So close!_ She thought. _I was so close and then someone just had to come and wreck all that for me!_

She grumbled unintelligibly and sat herself against the wall. She was going to wait for that woman to come out, no matter how long it took.

Three hours later...

Cleo had been waiting. And waiting. And waiting.

The woman still hadn't come out. She was now fiddling with her phone â€" which she had turned on silent after yesterday's escapade â€" and swallowing little multi-coloured ghosts with something that looked like a lemon cheesecake with a slice missing.

She waited fifteen minutes longer, and finally the woman came out, disappearing as quickly as she had walked in.

Cleo waited for a while more, just to make sure that no one else was coming. She scrambled up and raced for the door. With shaking hands,

she turned the handle.

She slipped inside.

* * *

><p>There was a figure sitting in a chair in the middle of the room.<p>

Cleo raced over to him. She gasped as she took in his face â€" a split lip, a cut cheek, a black eye, and a small gash across his forehead.

"Lewis!" She screamed, shaking him.

He looked up, his eyes flashing dully. "Cl... Cleo? Is that you?" He asked slowly.

"Lewis, it's me," She whispered.

"I'm delusional." He groaned, banging his head against the back of the chair.

"No, you're not," She said, smiling and kissing his sweet, beautiful forehead, "I'm here. Don't worry."

She scrabbled at the restraints around his legs and hands, having no idea how they were going to get past the guards once she had freed him.

"Cleo," He said, his voice raspy and hard.

"Yeah?" She asked, looking up at him.

"Go. Go now." He said.

"Never," She replied, "I'm not leaving you."

She frowned and stood up, trying to see if there was any other way to loosen his restraints.

"Cleo!"

She turned around. "I've told you. I am not leaving you!"

"No, it's not that," He said, looking up at her intently, "You're bleeding."

Cleo looked down and realised that the huge red stain had grown. "Right," She muttered distractedly. "That."

She managed to loosen the binds on his hands. "There," She said happily. "One more left."

"Cleo," He grabbed her hand and pulled her down to his level. "You're bleeding too much. Go get help."

"No, I'm fine." She insisted, although she was beginning to feel a little lightheaded.

"Cleo, listen to me," He said, looking down at her red stained t-shirt, "At least let me help."

She shook her head firmly, resolve burning in her eyes.

He poked lightly at the large gash in her stomach. She gasped, her eyes pricking with tears.

"That proves my point. Let me help you."

Tears of pain dribbled down her face as she leaned on Lewis for support. "I'm fine," She said, her voice strangled and broken.

He petted her hair. "No you're not. Stubbornness only goes so far, Cleo,"

She wiped at her face and stood. "No. I'm getting you out of here. We can worry about me later."

She scratched and fiddled with the restraints around his legs, but they just wouldn't come loose.

She cried in frustration and buried her head in her arms. The sound of a door opening made her look up.

A guard walked in, and she scrambled for a patch of shade at the edge of the room.

"I heard voices. Who are you talking to?" He demanded, peering down at Lewis with disgust. "You got out of your restraints. You're covered with blood. How did you manage that?"

Cleo wanted to give this man an award for stating the obvious. He seemed to be rather spectacular at it.

Cleo watched helplessly as the man re-bound Lewis's wrists, and this time put a rag over his mouth. He knelt in front of him.

"This is your last chance. What do you know about the mermaids?" He asked.

Lewis seemed to be saying something. The man took away the cloth covering his mouth.

"Go to hell!" Lewis screamed and spat in the man's face.

Cleo watched in horror, tears dribbling down her cheeks, as the man covered Lewis's mouth once more and struck him hard across the face. His cheeks dribbled with blood.

The man walked out, slamming the door behind him.

Cleo ran back over to Lewis, stroking his bleeding face. "Lewis," She gasped. "Oh, I'm so sorry. For everything. I'm sorry I didn't come sooner, I'm sorry I let them take you at all!" She sobbed.

He pressed his forehead against hers, not being able to speak. It must have hurt a lot due to the large gash on his forehead, but he stayed there, comforting her, regardless of the pain.

"I love you so much," She whispered. "I will come back for you."

She cried and kissed his forehead before heading for the door. She couldn't afford to stay in there " if there was one guard, there would be others. "I promise." She said and closed the door shut behind her.

She grabbed her bag, tears dribbling down her cheeks, and climbed back through the broken window, making sure to be much more careful this time.

I will fulfil my promise, she swore to herself. _I will come back for him._

12. Chapter 12

****Hey guys! Phew, three chapters all in one go! Hope you feel lucky.****

* * *

><p>Cleo held the binoculars up to her hazel-green eyes. She had bought them the other day, wearing a hoodie and sunglasses. She thought she had done a pretty good job of disguising herself.<p>

She had been observing Lewis's captors techniques for weeks now, and had learnt a few things. Firstly, a woman visited him frequently. But Cleo could never get a good look at her, she was too brisk " all Cleo knew was that she was brunette and female. Not much to go on. Secondly, she had figured out the guard regime.

They always disappeared when the woman was about to arrive, and came back when she had left. They also took ten minute breaks at ten 'o clock, three 'o clock, seven 'o clock, and eleven PM. Cleo had only stayed that late once " so that last break she was pretty sure she wouldn't be slipping into.

It was now 9:58. The guards were beginning to disperse, and she saw her chance. She raced down to Lewis's cell and opened the door " it was never locked, as she always expected it to be.

She was relieved to see that his black eye and cuts were healing, except for the two on his right cheek " the one which had been there already and the one the guard inflicted upon him " the first had opened up again after the attack and the second was still rather fresh and wasn't done hurting. She was also happy to see that they had removed the cloth covering his mouth, so she could now speak with him.

"Lewis," She said, gently shaking him, for he was asleep.

"Cleo," He murmured, his blue eyes fluttering open, "You're back."

"Yeah," She replied softly. "How are you feeling?"

"Better now that you're here," He said, leaning back in his chair.

She gazed down at his wrists, which were raw from the tight restraints and were twitching ever so slightly. She squeezed his hand, stilling the movement.

He looked up at her, his blue eyes flashing dull with pain. "How's your stomach?"

For a moment she didn't understand the question. "It's fine," She mumbled, not meeting his eyes. She would have a scar for life.

"No, it's not," He said, his eyes boring into hers, "Don't lie to me. I can't always tell when you're lying."

She sighed. It was true, he always could. But she just said, "I'm not lying,"

"Cleo. Come on."

"No, seriously, I'm okay," She insisted.

But she wasn't. She hadn't gone to a hospital because she knew just how completely and utterly out of the question it was, so she had put her nursing skills – albeit poor ones – to use and bandaged herself up.

"Alright, fine." He sighed, still weary. "I guess I'd better tell you my story." He said.

"Please do."

"It all started with this call I got," He said, "Someone asked me about mermaids. I said that was absurd; mermaids didn't exist – but they didn't believe me." He sighed.

She nodded. "Go on."

"And then... well, I was just talking to you, and..." He shrugged, and then winced because even that small movement hurt, "Well, you know."

"Alright," She said, her voice even. "Let's get to work."

"Work?" He repeated.

"Yup," She nodded. "We can't just waltz out with the guards outside scrutinising our every move." She said.

"So, basically," Lewis said, leaning back against the chair, "We need a battle plan."

"Mhm," Cleo nodded, spotting an old splintery chair in the corner of the room that was shaded with darkness. She pulled it over and sat next to Lewis. _That woman must use it when she talks to him,_ Cleo thought wonderingly. _She wouldn't be able to stand forever._

She wanted to ask Lewis a million questions about that woman, but he looked exhausted and she didn't want to inflict any more misery upon him.

So she just sat with him quietly, all the possible plans racing

through her mind. She sat back in the chair, letting her buzzing mind still for a moment — only a moment. The air was damp and rancid, and the stifled morning sun shone dully through the one single window posted at the back of the room. A sharp blade of sadness cut at her, thinking of Lewis sitting here, day after day, the misery relentless. The white hot sun beating down on his face, tantalising, alluring and teasing, but just out of his reach.

It now occurred to her that Lewis had fallen asleep, his breathing soft and rhythmic next to her. His head was leaning on her shoulder, a thin trail of drool flowing from his mouth and onto Cleo's t-shirt. She didn't overly mind.

Turns out the nap was destined to be a short one, as the pain in his wrists which after days had reduced to a constant ache woke him after about fifteen minutes. "Cleo," He muttered, frowning slightly. "I fell asleep."

She ran her hands through his hair and sighed. "Sweetie, not to be rude, but you're stating the obvious," She said, lacking the usual affection she would have had.

"I am?" He asked, snuggling back into Cleo's shoulder.

"Little bit." Cleo replied, her voice stony and hard, but she couldn't make it sound any other way.

She gently got up, so as to make sure Lewis's head didn't bang against the splintering wood of her arm rest, and sighed.

"What is it?" Lewis asked, alert suddenly, as if all that was needed to grab his attention was that small shuddering sound.

She turned to him. "Do you really have to ask?"

"Err..." He paused, looking around, at his restraints, the scuffed, damp walls, everything. "Not really."

"Then I'd prefer you didn't," She said, turning her back to him and wrapping her arms around herself.

She rubbed at her temples. How were they going to get out of there?

"Okay, okay," She said, turning around, now stiff and businesslike. "We need to sort out a plan," She murmured, running her hands through her hair. It hung down in front of her face, covering her eyes. She decided then and there to put it into a plait, to stop it from annoying her and to give her hands something to do besides fidget anxiously.

"Alright," Lewis said, a little confusedly, puzzled at what could have caused Cleo's sudden mood change.

She rubbed at her face and cheeks. Lewis peered at her; she was anxious, anyone could see that. "Cleo," He said. "Seriously, remember you can tell me anything. What's the matter?"

She let out an almost bitter laugh. "So many things," She murmured despairingly.

Lewis simply stared at her. Cleo was usually an unquestionably brave person, whether she was standing up for her friends or pushing Zane Bennett out of an oak tree.

Cleo's eyes were glistening, but she made sure to keep them out of Lewis's view. Her confidence was chipping away, piece by piece, and in the unseemly silence that had settled over the room all she could seem to think were despairing thoughts. _I miss my friends._ _I miss my family_. _I miss the clear blue Australian waters._ _I miss Mako Island_. _I miss the moon pool. I miss my fish_. _And_ _who cares, I'll just go for broke here. I miss Kim._ She thought. The list seemed incredibly long.

She turned away from Lewis, the dizzy feeling overwhelming her completely. She took a few deep breaths, resting her hands on the top of her head. The action somehow seemed anchoring.

After a few more calm exhales, she turned back around. "Okay. Okay." She muttered under her breath.

Lewis stared at her, wishing more than anything he could break free just to hold her. "Cleo...?"

She held up a finger, indicating _just give me a second. _She tapped at her right temple, trying to fight the feeling like her mind was swimming. "I'm good," She murmured. "I'm fine. You have something to tell me?" She looked at him expectantly.

"No..." He shook his head. "No, not really." He said. He looked up at her, frowning. _She says she's okay. She would tell me otherwise. She would tell me. She's fine. She's fine... right?_

Cleo stared into his puzzled face, having no idea what he was muddling over, but drawing strength from him regardless. His presence was comforting; the familiar flash of his blue eyes was like a burst of clarity. She knew she would be fine, as long as he was there.

* * *

><p>Cleo tapped through the pictures. Her smiling face, photos of her kissing Lewis on the cheek and laughing with him " it was a little overwhelming.<p>

Not that she hadn't been present for the taking of these photographs. It was just strange, the days when they had been taken seemed so far away, almost foggy. The days when they could be happy without any shadows, without any surprises around the corner. It was almost laughable now, what he had said to her the day he was captured.

She would give anything to still be able to talk to a bunch of pixels that looked like him.

It was better than what they had now, anyway. She stared at a picture of herself laughing at Lewis because a 'mysterious gust of wind' had sprayed him head to toe with water after he had made a joke about her choice of clothes that day. She closed the laptop, walked out of her cave and to 74th. She thought of the picture and smiled, which was a rare thing nowadays.

Her melodic bursts of laughter cut through the still air.

"That wasn't funny!" Lewis huffed, shaking out his hair.

Cleo jumped back a few steps, still laughing. "I disagree!" She giggled.

_"You find this hilarious, don't you?" He asked touchily.__

>

>"Well..." She said, seeming to pause and think about whether humiliating him further really was the good-hearted thing to do, "Pretty much, yeah!" She snickered._

>

>"Consider this payback for your opinions, then." He said smugly._

>

>"Payback...?" She asked, but was left trailing when Lewis flicked water all over her._

>

>"Lewis!" She cried in dismay, staring at him. She searched for something logical and rational to argue with, something to yell back at him to convince him it was wrong to so immaturely flick water all over her, but, finding nothing just said, "You suck!" and dove into the nearby moon pool._

>

>She soon surfaced, glaring so fiercely that if it were possible for human eyes to produce flames, he would be alight. Her brown curls were slicked down her back, straightened by the water. Her eyelashes were glistening wet._

>

>"You suck!" She repeated.

_He crouched in front of her, grinning. "I gave you a chance to answer right," He said. "It's not my fault you didn't take it."__

>

>"I... I..." She searched for a witty comeback, but upon finding nothing, decided to kiss him. He thought this was all because he had trumped her, until suddenly Cleo was yanking on his collar and he was toppling into the water._

>

>He came up spitting out mouthfuls of water. "Cleo!" He cried, wiping his hair out of his eyes. "That wasn't..."

_"Funny?" She interrupted. "That's strange, because I seem to recall you laughing at my misfortune mere seconds ago."__

>

>"That was payback!" He huffed childishly._

>

>"You made fun of my clothing," She pointed out, "After remarking that my eyes were the colour of sludge. I don't find that extremely complimenting." She said._

>

>"Err..." He paused, seeing the not too happy look on Cleo's face. "I didn't mean that?"_

>

>Her lips pressed together, forming a pensive line._

>

>"Your eyes aren't the colour of sludge. Your eyes are beautiful." He stammered._

>
>She frowned.

_"Come on; I was just teasing." He said in a pleading tone.___
>
>She sighed, her eyebrows furrowing.

_"Erm..." He sputtered. He had come up short. "I love you?"__
>
>She finally smiled, her eyes â€" the eyes that were no longer
the colour of sludge and had evolved into a beautiful hazel green
within the last thirty seconds â€" lit up, her entire face
beaming._
>
>"I accept your apology," She said warmly._
>
>She leaned in to kiss him â€" this time not just under the
pretence of kissing him, but because she actually wanted to._

>
>By now she was slipping into Lewis's room, the memory fading.<p>

He was awake this time, and looked at her intently as she walked
through the door. "You're back," He said.

She nodded at him silently.

He was still staring at her, his blue eyes flashing with something
she couldn't place, yet looking more recognisable than they had since
she'd first set eyes in him in this place.

"What is it?" She asked. _Why is he looking at me like that? Do I
have something on my face?_ She thought confusedly.

He looked away shyly. "Nothing. You look pretty, is all."

She blushed, her pulse quickening. With that simple comment, it felt
like they had reverted back to being a young couple. As her cheeks
burned with heat, she certainly felt like it.

* * *

><p>I thought this story could do with a little fluffiness,
instead of all the grim despair it's been getting. I don't especially
like writing like that, but the storyline calls for it. Sorry. I'll
try to put in as many cute Clewis moments as I can!

13. Chapter 13

Hey guys! This is the chapter we've all been waiting for...

* * *

><p>Cleo was smiling broadly as she darted through the water. It was
a strange sensation, swimming through waters that were unfamiliar to
her, but she enjoyed it all the same. Everything looked different and
seemed to have a certain gleam to it, just like it had when she had
first become a mermaid.<p>

She stopped in the water, flicking her tail every few seconds to keep herself from being washed away by the currents. Her hair made a dark swirl around her head and she stared, transfixed with delight at all the vivid colours of the ocean. She hadn't realised how much she'd missed this.

She continued on, streams of sunlight bouncing off her tail. The whole point of this exercise had been to clear her head. Lewis had suggested it, after she'd spent hours sitting in his cell chewing on a pencil. She'd argued furiously with him " she just couldn't see how frolicking with the dolphins could help her come up with an idea any more than sitting there wracking her brain. But he'd eventually won out, saying that "swimming always relaxes you, and ideas come most freely when you're relaxed." She'd grumbled bitterly at his logic.

She grabbed onto a mount of coral and floated there for a moment. She had frowned and only accepted his suggestion if she could choose the amount of time she remained in the water. Initially, he'd said two and a half hours, but eventually they'd shaved it down to forty minutes.

She figured her time must almost be up, so reluctantly she headed back to shore. She would never say it to his face, but swimming had indeed relaxed her. Now all she had to do was wait for the ideas to flow in.

She was soon dry, and afterwards walked to 74th and slipped into Lewis's cell, making sure not to be seen.

"I have an idea," She announced.

He raised an eyebrow. "Swimming did some good, huh?"

She threw him a glare and sat down on the hard concrete floor.

He looked at her expectantly. "What is this idea?"

"Alright," She said, running through the plan again in her mind and making sure she had all the details. "Here's how we'll do things..."

_Ten minutes of explaining later...__

>

>Lewis looked at her in approval. "Sounds good. In fact, it sounds pretty fantastic." He said.<p>

Cleo smiled up at him; then frowned. "There's just one thing..." She muttered.

Lewis raised an eyebrow. "The guard. You're worried you'll hurt the guard."

She looked up at him, her eyes shining with guilt and a little bit of fear. "Exactly."

"Cleo, have you ever been knocked down to the floor and hit your head?"

She looked at him as if saying _seriously?_ "Lewis, when I get hit

with water, I grow a tail. What do you think?" She asked, grimacing as she remembered all the bumps and bruises she had sustained from being splashed unexpectedly.

"Right," He continued, not the slightest bit fazed by Cleo's unimpressed stare, "That's all you're doing to the guard." He said simply.

She frowned, but eventually nodded. "Alright. I'll do it, but that doesn't mean I'll like it." She said finally.

He nodded. "I promise you won't hurt him." He said, wanting to reassure her when he saw that a small flicker of doubt still remained in her eyes.

"Okay. I trust you." She said, standing and brushing off her trousers. "When are we going to do this?"

"Tomorrow. It's getting late; I don't think we should do it today." He suggested, looking out the singular window placed high on the wall, where the setting sun was shining through the bars that covered the glass.

"Alright, tomorrow then." She said with a decisive nod of her head. She walked towards the door and stopped, her hand wavering above the knob. She turned. "Lewis?" She said. He looked at her.

"I love you."

That said, she waved and slipped out of the room and back to her cavern, the one which she would hopefully be leaving soon.

_Somewhere around midnight...__

>

>Cleo jogged across the sand. No one was out here, but she wore a baggy hoodie just in case. As she ran, her ponytail bouncing around her shoulders, she went over the plan in her head.<p>

The plan was for Lewis to complain of an injury, drawing a nearby guard's attention so that he walked into the cell to see what was happening. Then Cleo would sneak up from behind and hit him on the back of the head with a stone, hopefully striking him unconscious. Eventually the guards' presence would be missed, and hopefully a few more guards would come in to see why he was gone. They would see their unconscious companion, and most likely bring the rest of their workmates in. It was then that Cleo would run at them, using her powers to start a ferocious windstorm, and in the panic and confusion she would pick the guards pockets to find the keys to Lewis's chains.

She hoped she would have the strength to carry him, because he obviously wasn't in a condition to walk. But if she could indeed support him, she would intensify the storm and the two would slip out.

There were many factors that could go wrong, but she really tried not to focus on that. She knew that there were too many "most likely's" and "hopefully's", but she just prayed that everything would go according to plan. If it didn't, they were in some serious hot

water.

She pushed all thoughts of failure from her mind and tried to focus on more subtle things. _The stars look pretty tonight,_ was one attempt. _I should probably get some sleep _was another. She refused to be grim when Lewis managed to be so chipper, even though he was the one chained to a chair! She shook her head and sat down on a nearby rock, retrieving her water bottle and taking a large gulp.

Sweat clung to her forehead, turning cold due to the freezing midnight air. She let out a shuddering breath and stood to head back to her cave. She blew out her cheeks and peeled off her hoodie, replacing it with her blanket. With it wrapped around her shoulders, she untied her sneakers and wiggled her toes. She reached for her phone and turned it on. _12:27... I really should be getting some sleep..._

So she tossed her phone with her things, pulled her blanket tighter around her, and shut her eyes.

The next morning...

Cleo was almost shivering when she walked to 74th to meet Lewis, that's how nervous she was.

She fiddled with the ends of her hair in anxiety, breathing sharply and mouthing over and over: "Everything will be fine. Everything will be fine." She was chewing on her lip as the broken window came into sight, the one she always went in and out from and also the one she had gotten cut from. Somewhere along the way, she had smashed in all the jagged protruding edges so that they were practically smooth and would only prick her if she purposely touched them. Regardless, she was still cautious climbing through. You could never be too careful.

As she snuck through the shadows to Lewis's cell, all she was thinking was about how wrong things could go. _I mean, what if I don't manage to knock the guard unconscious and he turns on me? Or what if I can't carry Lewis? Or perhaps they aren't as easily bamboozled as we think they are and manage to see through my windstorm and capture us? Oh dear oh dear oh dear..._ she swallowed down the prickling in her eyes, plastered on a smile, and twisted the handle to Lewis's room.

The smile washed off her face as soon as she realised Lewis was snoring, fast asleep. She didn't want to wake him and be forced to move forward with the plan, but she also couldn't bear being left with this growing sense of dread in her chest.

She woke him. "Lewis," She whispered, tapping his shoulder. "Time to wake up."

His eyes opened, focusing on her. "Oh, Cleo. Sorry." He muttered.

"It's fine. Are you... are you ready?" She asked, frowning.

He looked at her. "Cleo, are you nervous?"

"No."

"Alright then," He sighed, his eyebrows furrowing. She knew he could see right through her fib. "Just give me a second."

Silently Cleo waited in the corner of the room, her figure veiled by shadow.

_Ten minutes later...__

>

>"Help! Can I get somebody in here?"<p>

She had to admit Lewis's act was pretty convincing.

"Dammit, aren't hostages supposed to be valuable? Because I need some help here!"

Eventually there was a grunting noise from behind the door and it opened a fraction.

"What on earth are you screaming about?" A man with a gruff voice demanded.

Cleo and Lewis had foreseen this â€" the man being suspicious enough to only open the door halfway â€" so they had done some extra preparing.

Lewis's was tipped over in his chair, with what looked like blood â€" but was really just water thoroughly mixed with a whole lot of red food colouring â€" in a large pool around him.

"Holy..." The man muttered, and quickly opened the door. He crouched in front of Lewis, his mouth agape and his face paling. This obviously was one of Lewis's more queasy guards. "What in blazes happened to you?"

While Lewis groaned and spluttered, Cleo grabbed a stone that sat atop the barred window and crept up behind the guard. He had closed the door behind him â€" and it was a thick, heavy duty kind, made of metal â€" so no one would hear him if he did indeed cry out. The thought made Cleo herself a little queasy.

Cleo closed her eyes and hit the man.

When she finally managed to open them, it was because Lewis was calling her name. The man was slumped face down on the ground. Tears sprung to her eyes and she hurriedly dropped her weapon.

She reached into her bag and pulled out a bandage. Just because she had been forced to hurt this man did not mean she was a monster incapable of caring. She wound it around his head and snipped off the end. She was relieved to see that there was little to no blood â€" she had not hit hard enough to split the skin and had overall done less damage than she thought she would. She tied off the end of the cotton bandage, biting her lip. Perhaps the damage wasn't very extensive, but she still hoped he was okay.

Lewis whispered her name, rousing her from her trance. She looked at him. "Little help?"

"Of course," She muttered and got off her knees. She pulled him upright and cleaned his "blood" splattered face. There was nothing she could do about his t-shirt, though, it was far beyond saving. It's original colour had been grey, but now it looked more red than anything.

"What do we do now?" Lewis asked.

"We wait."

Later...

Cleo leant against the cold stone wall, closing her eyes tightly. While they had been waiting, a thousand plans better than the one they had now had flashed across her mind. But it was too late to change now.

In a desperate attempt to keep herself from having a meltdown, her mind grasped for the first topic that jumped out; her friends. She hadn't allowed herself to think about her friends since Emma's call the few days before. She wondered how Bella's university plans were going. When she had left, she had been on the verge of mailing a new application. Cleo was dying to know how that had turned out.

And Rikki; she hadn't been all that interested in the "boring school stuff" but with consistent nagging from Emma and Cleo and gentle "what Bella thought were whispers, but was actually just discreet prodding" she had begrudgingly filled in a handful of applications. It was Emma who really did all the hard work "that being stealing the forms from back under Rikki's bed and managing to send them without her knowledge until she checked under her mattress for a lost twenty dollar bill the week later.

Emma of course had the disadvantage of taking the whole of the last year's classes online; but she did have an official and completely credible diploma. In fact, she would not be satisfied until the school was hounded and it was hanging on the wall in her room, with an elegant gold frame.

A small noise to her left "like a sharp intake of breath" made her look around. Her gaze zoned in on Lewis, but he wasn't looking at her at all, he was staring at the door...

Too late she realised what was happening. She scrambled up just as a half dozen men "possibly more, she couldn't count" crashed through the door and hurled at her. She kicked and bit and managed to make it over to Lewis.

"Cleo! How did this happen?" He said over the roar.

"No time," She choked, pulling and tugging at his restraints. How had they discovered her? How was it possible? She knew all along that there were flaws with the plan, but not enough to cause repercussions this big!

She felt nails dig into her calf, and knew it was time for the mermaid side of the plan. The wind started raging, and shouts of confusion echoed from man to man. She was now kicking at the chains, tears stinging in her eyes. With an irritable growl, she ran over to the one unconscious guard, the one she had hit. Searching his pockets

and coming up empty, she crept up on the others who were still screaming in wonder about her powers.

One was kneeling on the floor with his hands over his head, and she could just make out his mutters: "Please Lord, don't let me die..." She easily picked his pockets and came up with a thin, metal skeleton key.

She scrambled back over to Lewis, tripping over her own feet. The guards were beginning to get over their wonderment " she needed to be fast. She hastily jammed the key in the lock of his ankle chains, and turned. _Click._ She couldn't help the glee that bloomed through her. She quickly freed him and tipped him over her shoulder, having no time for his manly pride.

The guards in the room were now making a beeline for them " so she bolted for the ajar door, heart hammering. As her hands reached for the handle, a hand caught her roughly by the wrist. She clung to the doorframe as the man yanked at her, twisting her arm so hard it very nearly popped out of its socket.

Getting a firm grip on Lewis, she kicked at the man's stomach. He barely flinched and just lunged for her again, so she punched him hard in the face.

He staggered back, howling as he clutched his no doubt black eye. She took her chance and scampered out the door. Screams and shouts followed them, footsteps pounded, but she never once dared to look back.

A frigid breeze greeted them as they escaped into the inky blackness of the night.

* * *

><p>Isn't it just so exciting? The next chapter will bring even more drama! I'd love to know what you thought of the latest update of _Kidnapped Love! _Be seeing you!****

>

14. Chapter 14

**Hey guys! I wanna say, I meant to update _ages _ago, but I got super duper sidetracked and time dribbled away like water. Sorry! _Hopefully _I'll get the next chapter up real quick.
>

* * *

><p>"I love what you've done with the place."<p>

"Lewis, stop being sarcastic and hold still," She chided, flipping the lid on a bottle of disinfectant and squirting some out on her hand. They were back in her cave, where the cold stung and she had put tape over all the places prone to leakage. He didn't complain. "This'll sting."

"Firstly, I meant that comment with the utmost sincerity, and

secondly " what the heck is that stuff? It _hurts!_" He howled, shooting her a death glare.

"I kinda did warn you."

"No warning in the entire world could prepare me for this!"

"Stop being such a baby." She said, now done with his ankles and moving onto his wrists. "And trust me; an infection would be a heck of a lot worse. You don't want it to get infected, do you? _Do you?_"

His lips pursed. "I guess not,"

"And anyway, we're all done now." She said, flicking the bottle over her shoulder where it landed in her open bag. She went to go pack it away properly, and a memory crept up on her while her back was to him. It was one obtaining a rather similar argument about disinfectant...

_A seven-year-old Cleo Sertori giggled as she walked on top of the fence like a tightrope walker.__

>

>They were at Lewis's uncle's farm, on a warm summer's day, and it featured luscious grass and plenty of fences to hop. Her mother had frequently told her it was too dangerous to walk the fences, but she so wanted to impress Lewis she did it anyway.

_"Come on, Cleo! You're almost there!" He cheered jubilantly from the grass below.__

>

>She wobbled a bit, crying out and thrashing for something to hold onto. "Don't worry, Cleo!" She dared open one eye to look down at the beaming Lewis, with his arms outstretched. "If anything happens, I'll catch you."

That gave her the confidence to keep going. She stumbled to the edge, clinging to the post and letting out a little shriek of triumph. "I did it! Lewis, I did it!"

_"Yes you did!" He grinned at her, and in that one second of happiness and security, she accidentally let go of the post. She screamed as she tumbled down from the fence, limbs flailing. __And then all of a sudden, there were warm, steady arms around her. Her heart fluttered with hope, but then her stomach lurched once more as the sheer force of her fall sent both of them sprawling.__

>

>She lifted herself partway off the ground, coughing as everything swirled around her. As she blinked the haze away, her eyes focused on the lying heap of Lewis. He was fine " he'd landed in the soft wild grass. She breathed a shuddering sigh of relief and tried to stand, but let out a yelp as she tumbled straight back down again.

_She flipped herself over, her messy brown locks falling over her eyes. A steady dribble of blood was trailing down her leg from a large gash on her knee. "Owchie," She said, wrinkling her nose.__

>
__Lewis crawled over to her and frowned empathetically. "Aw, Cleo!" He said, shaking his blonde mop of a head, "You're so accident

prone."_

_Cleo scowled something terrible â€" stupid Lewis and his smarty pants words. She tried to swipe away the blood bravely with her hands to prove to him that she was the superior one, despite her war wound, but just ended up with sticky bright red fingers. "Ick!" She shrieked, hurriedly wiping her hands off on the grass.__

>

>"Don't worry," He said, smiling at her warmly. "I'll go get your mum."

Cleo's little nose wrinkled as she thought of the fierce telling off that was sure to ensue. "Alright," She said, defeated. "I guess."

Lewis ran away and she could hear his faint yelling as he thrashed about in front of the kitchen window where her mother was doing the dishes.

_He came back minutes later, chattering away to Mrs Sertori about Cleo's fall.__

>

>Beverly knelt by her young daughter, her mouth a pensive line. "What did I tell you about the fences?"

Cleo made a face. "They're dangerous," She said in a prissy high-pitched voice, even though her mother sounded nothing like that. Lewis snickered. "You tell me off all the time. It's not fair! If I want to play on the fences with Lewis, I should be able to!" She argued, her bottom lip sticking out defiantly.

Beverly looked over her shoulder and cast Lewis a wary look â€" he had obviously not told her that part of the story. Her brown curls, the ones Cleo had inherited, fluttered in the steady breeze as she looked back at Cleo, with a hard stare that did nothing to quell her soft features.

_After a moment of battling glares with her daughter, Beverly sighed and threw her hands up in the air. "We'll talk about this later. For now, let's just get you fixed up."__

>

>She opened a first aid kit, and Cleo gulped nervously when she caught sight of the large needle gleaming in the summer light. But to her relief, Beverly simply took out a pack of bandaids and a purple bottle of something Cleo had never seen before and thought had a needlessly long and complicated name: disinfectant._

>

>She watched curiously as her mother squirted some of the bottles contents out onto her palm. "Mum, what's tha â€""_

>

>She let out a shriek and found that she didn't need to finish her sentence. She knew what this was â€" her mother was trying to kill her._

>

>"Sweetie, hold still." Beverly said, frowning as Cleo flailed and screamed. "It's really not that bad."_

>

>"Of course it's bad! You're poisoning me!" Cleo screeched, trying to inch away from her mother who had suddenly turned into a fiery demon of pain.

_Beverly held Cleo's legs down while she applied more disinfectant. "This is something to keep your cut from infecting. Do you want to get infected? That'll hurt a lot more!"__

>

>"No it won't! I'd rather get infected! I'd rather get infected and die!"__

>

>Lewis squeezed her hand. "Don't worry, Cleo. I'm here. Just look at me."

_Cleo bit her lip and glanced over at him.__

>

>And suddenly, everything was okay.

"Why are you smiling?"

Cleo shook her head as the memory faded. "It's nothing."

"Alright," He said, deciding to push off her weird behaviour for now.

She picked up her bag. "I'm going out for a while."

He frowned concernedly; worry flashing in his blue eyes. "Where?" He asked, pushing himself upright. "You're not going back... _there_, are you?"

"Don't worry, I'm just gonna go see how much trouble we're in with the whole kidnapped thing," She said, grabbing her hoodie and sunglasses for emphasis.

"Oh. Sure." She said, seeming satisfied that she wasn't going to run into trouble â€" or that much, anyway â€" and lay back down.

She waved to him and slipped out of the cave. She trusted him to get some sleep â€" it might not be proper sleep, but it would be better than what he'd been getting recently. She jogged up to the street, where people were milling about for another day of work and she could easily slip into the large crowd, unnoticed. No one would remember her.

She bit her lip â€" she felt bad about lying to Lewis. She was going back to 74th. She couldn't just rest easy when there were people out there who knew her secret and had no qualms with unleashing it to the world.

She shook herself â€" that's why she was going _back_ there, to stop them. There was no point in getting anxious about it and talking herself into not going. She was _going_ to stop them. She had to â€" if she didn't... she didn't want to even think about it.

She told herself this as she walked all the way to the richer part of town. Perhaps she hadn't really been lying to Lewis â€" she _was_ going to check on their situation and see whether her or both of their names came up on the news. Now she just needed to find that electronics shop again.

She looked around, trying to remember where the store had been. The entire neighbourhood was pristine â€" it looked so _perfect_ it

seemed impossible that humans actually lived in each of these big white households. She walked down a street and turned a corner, and there was the store she had seen last time. She ran up to it, pushing her sunglasses up her nose and flicking up her hood.

It was the local news again, luckily. She pressed up against the glass, straining to hear every single word that came out of the slightly chubby reporter's mouth. She watched for a few minutes until the section she had been waiting for came up: MISSING PERSONS.

Pictures dotted the screen " at least twenty people missing. In the middle row, she spotted her face. And at the bottom right hand corner was Lewis. _ I had been wondering whether they'd actually classified him as missing, _she thought, frowning slightly as her heart twanged for the eighteen other missing people. People who were actually _missing._

And then her face was on the screen with the reporter speaking in his ridiculous American accent. She must have been some sort of top story, because she'd been shown at least twice, and she didn't even live in this country yet they'd put her on their missing persons list. She stared at the screen, ridden with guilt as she watched her friends shy away from flashing cameras and eager reporters.

"Sad, isn't it?" She turned around to see a pretty woman with wavy black hair and bright blue eyes. She was walking a baby in a stroller, looking at the screen forlornly. "You spend so much time and effort raising a beautiful child with a bright future and then someone just comes and snatches her up. It's tragic." She said, shushing her baby when it let out a few weak wails. She started walking away; her shoulders slumped, when she suddenly turned around. There was a fierce look in her eyes. "Whoever took that poor sweet girl, wherever he is, I hope he's getting punished for his sins and then some."

She wiped at her face, swiping angry tears, and briskly walked away.

Cleo stared after her, a horrible feeling " something akin to guilt and rage, rage she realised, at herself " rising in her chest. She slumped to the ground and covered her face with her hands. She sat there, silent tears running down her cheeks, until she finally got up. She wiped at her eyes with her sleeve and ran away and out of the neighbourhood and its stupid uniform houses.

She ran all the way to 74th. She glided through the broken window and onto the ground below. She checked for guards, but there were none. _What did our escape result in? Where are the guards now that they're no longer needed?_ She thought, and something in the back of her mind flared. _What I really want to know is who that strange woman is,_ she mused, her nose wrinkling at the thought. She didn't like not knowing.

She walked through the warehouse to find it relatively empty. Her footsteps echoed lonesomely, and there wasn't a single person in sight. _How could they all have just disappeared? _This wasn't right. This wasn't right at all. Yesterday there had been a dozen or more guards posted outside Lewis's cell, but now she stared at it full on, and if she hadn't seen it for herself she would very well think this

place had been uninhabited for years now.

Even though there was no reason for alarm, the hairs on the back of her neck bristled. It was eerie, like something out of one of Rikki's beloved horror movies. The whole sense of this place reminded her of a tiger ready to pounce on its prey.

Prey.

Suddenly she felt very closed in, as if the walls were shrinking around her. Everything seemed distorted and terrifying as she realised what this place really was, and had been since she had set foot outside it with Lewis.

Trap. It's a trap.

She knew things hadn't been right. She should have run as far and as fast as she could away from this place, never looking back. But now she watched in horror as everything seemed to come alive, like an infant drawing its first breath.

Men dribbled out of every corner and crack, every hiding place she'd ever considered.

She screamed, but a hand clutched her throat and squeezed so hard she couldn't breathe. She tried to kick and thrash, but soon her arms and legs were pinned down. Tears prickled at her eyes.

A man stood in front of her, raising a gun. She tried to scream, but the hand clenched again and her throat felt like fire.

"Nighty night, mermaid." He said in a cruel, cold voice. He squeezed the trigger.

Bang.

* * *

><p>Cleo woke up dizzy and disoriented.<p>

Her eyes tried to focus and eventually succeeded after a few minutes, and she saw the sun shining through an open window. She heard birds twittering outside.

This isn't right, she thought erratically. _I should be in a cell or something._

The sound of fingernails tapping on wood brought her attention to a woman sitting in front of her. They were separated by a desk, close enough that Cleo could see her individual eyelashes.

"Why hello there," She said in a clear melodious voice, like the chiming of bells.

Everything finally came into focus and Cleo shook her head. They were in an office, painted a serene light blue, and the strange brunette woman was sitting right there, with a window directly behind her making her shine with morning light.

"Yes, I'm sorry about that trunk. It does leave a few unfavourable

side effects." She said, smiling, and tapped her right temple.
"Addles the mind, doesn't it?"

"I don't want to talk to you," Cleo said firmly, her competence now restored after all the dizziness from the drug wore off.

"I completely understand," Said the woman almost
empathetically.

"Who _are_ you?" Cleo demanded, staring into her odd blue eyes. She was rather beautiful, with long brunette hair that curled at the tips and blue eyes that shone like the sun gleaming on the ocean. "Are you some lackey of Dr. Denman?" She asked. She had thought Denman would be here by now. To get her revenge at being humiliated so devastatingly.

"Ah, the good doctor," The woman said, smiling like she knew something Cleo didn't. Cleo was sure she could count a dozen things she was sure this person knew that she herself did not.

"I've had a few nice _chats_ with her,"

"What does that mean?" _Is she speaking in riddles or something? How can she not be with Denman?_

"No, I'm delighted to say I am _not_ in leagues with your precious biologist." The woman said, her eyes glittering. "She did make quite a fool of herself, didn't she?"

"If you're not working for her, then how do you know she 'made a fool of herself'?"

"The modern and rather fantastical methods of interrogation." She was tapping her fingers against the desk again. "Although when one is almost bounding and pleading to blab all about your little fishy side, it's not much of an interrogation anymore, is it?"

Huh. Cleo wouldn't have take Denman as a 'spill your guts' type of girl. Not when it came to something with such potential to make her an over-night millionaire.

Then again, she was probably relieved that after all this time someone was willing to believe her.

"Alright, so you're not with Denman." Cleo was silently overjoyed. At least with this woman there was probably _less_ chance of a public flogging in her near future. "Then who are you?"

"That doesn't matter, what matters is who _you_ are." She said, the smile never wiping off her face. Cleo felt she would very much like to _smack_ it off.

"Why does that matter?" Cleo snapped, frowning.

"You're a mermaid," The woman said, her smile now dancing on the borderlines of ghoulish. "_That's_ why it matters."

"You kidnapped my boyfriend!" Cleo spat, suddenly feeling an unquenchable rage. "You hurt him!"

"All because of you," The woman said, her grin definitely eerie now. "So really, you only have yourself to blame, don't you?"

Cleo felt like she had been slapped in the face. Her mouth opened and closed repeatedly.

"For goodness sake, it's not anything you didn't already know," The woman snapped, her fingernails tapping on the desk with impatience.

Cleo spluttered and took a deep breath in, feeling a little lightheaded. "I... I didn't..." She gasped out, "I wouldn't hurt him!"

"Oh, I know that," Said the woman, her lips curving downward into a sarcastic pout. "An innocent girl like you will have nothing to do with violence."

"I... yes!" She said feverishly. This woman had been able to poke at sore spots Cleo didn't know existed.

"Then could you please explain my several injured guards, hmm?" She smiled, showing too many teeth. "Not so innocent, are we?"

Cleo scowled. Then she frowned. Wait, several? I maybe hurt a couple, but I didn't hurt seven people!_

"Ah, you may be a little confused," The woman grabbed a laptop, pressed a few buttons and the screen flashed to life. There was a recording of her using her powers to escape some guards. The day of her birthday. She hadn't known people had gotten hurt after that, her only thought had been to run._

"It's a pity I didn't hire people who know a ruse when they see one," She sighed, snapping the laptop shut.

"No, it's a pity you didn't hire people who could contain a mermaid._" Cleo said, and felt a little bit proud of herself.

"That too," The woman said, smiling.

Cleo winced at the nylon cord tying her wrists to the chair. It cut through her skin whenever she struggled and her wrists were now stinging.

The woman seemed to notice this, and something flickered in her eyes. Impatience. "Jeff! Doug! Get in here!" She yelled, tapping her fingers on the desk again. It seemed to be a habit of hers.

Two men came scrambling in, guns attached at their hips. Cleo grimaced at the thought.

"Cut her restraints," The woman said, "I'd rather be equally matched against the person I'm talking to."

The guards looked hesitant for a moment, but as the woman's face grew thunderous, they hurried to let Cleo loose.

The guards left and Cleo rubbed at her red, raw wrists. "Why would you do that?"

"Like I said. I believe in an even playing field." The woman said, with a decisive little nod.

"But I'm a mermaid," Cleo continued, even though what she was about to say wasn't going to be for her benefit, "No matter what the odds are always going to be in my favour."

"Perhaps," The woman smiled that ghostly smile and tapped her right temple. "But perhaps you're forgetting that I have a dozen guards stationed outside, all loaded up with the finest in mermaid artillery."

Cleo's lips pursed. The woman was right, if Cleo dared to run, she probably wouldn't even make it a foot out the door.

"Now, let's talk about your attempts last night," The woman said, the unsettling smile never leaving her face.

"It wasn't an _attempt._ We made it out, didn't we?" Cleo snapped.

"Not as one would like to think, no."

Cleo stared at the woman. "What do you _mean?_" She said, confused.

"Think about last night. Think very hard." The woman's entire face was now beaming with eeriness.

Cleo frowned, but did as she was told. _Alright... Lewis went through with the plan, I hit that guard, and then we waited._ Her mind stopped up short. _But it all went wrong. The guards all rushed in at once. That wasn't supposed to happen..._

She suddenly understood why she had been asked to think about it.

"It is marvellous, isn't it?" The woman grinned, knowing that she had trumped her and there was nothing Cleo could ever do now to come out on top.

_No. It wasn't supposed to happen. More than not going to plan, it was impossible! _She thought, her mind a whirlwind of despair. _They knew. They knew all along. I wasn't operating in secret with Lewis, they were watching the whole time. They were waiting. Waiting for the right time to strike._

When she looked up again, her eyes filled with tears, the woman had placed the laptop in front of Cleo again.

It played.

She saw herself and Lewis flash onscreen. She screamed at shook him vigorously. "Lewis!"

"Cl... Cleo? Is that you?" She heard him ask, each second more horrible than the last.

"Yes, it's me," The woman pressed a button and the video paused.

Cleo's own lips were in mid-sentence and her eyes were bright, frozen in the screen.

Cleo looked up at the woman, her mouth agape in shock.

"Yes, we knew all about your little plan from the very beginning," She said, her voice serene and even.

Cleo stood slowly, her face to the wall.

"So you see? It really was inevitable." Came the woman's voice from behind her.

Cleo whirled around and pinned the woman to the wall. "_Big_ mistake setting me free,"

The woman opened her mouth to yell, but Cleo pressed her harder against the wall. "Don't you dare scream."

A ferocious wind blew the door closed, and there was a loud click; the door had locked shut.

"You listen to me. You will never ever come near me, Lewis, or my friends again, or I swear you'll get a lot more than bruises," For Cleo this was an empty threat, but the woman certainly didn't know that. "_Do you hear me?_"

The woman was whimpering now. She nodded, her ghoulish smug smile washed away. Her blue eyes shone bright with fear.

"I swear I will never hurt any of your loved ones ever again," She choked.

"Or any other mermaid for that matter," Cleo spat. She didn't want another helpless girl forced into to what she herself had gone through.

"No no, never," The woman mumbled, tears glistening in her eyes now.

Cleo let go of her, and the woman stumbled forward, struggling to breathe. Perhaps Cleo had held on a little too tight.

"And this is just a little taste of what you'll get if you break any of those promises," Cleo said, twisted her hand and a fierce wind knocked the woman backwards so she slammed hard into the wall.

The woman blinked against the sudden whirlwind, her screaming drowned out by the howl. Her eyes burned and she squeezed them tight.

When she opened them again, Cleo was gone.

* * *

><p>All I can say is whoa. I know, I know, the ending was a little over intense, but maybe it's good that way. I dunno, I'd like your advice. I guess I could always just re-write it, but I save doing that for huge mega-big lapses of judgement in storylines. And P.S., this story'll be wrapping up pretty soon. Hope you've

enjoyed it so far!**

15. Chapter 15

Sorry about the long wait, everybody! This is the last chapter, now it's just the epilogue to go... I'll try not to keep you waiting too long!

* * *

><p>It's over. It's finally over.

"You got the tickets?"

"For the millionth time, yes." She said as she lugged her suitcase across the Boston Logan Airport. Her hair fell in limp strands down her face and tickled her nose, and she didn't have the spare hand to swat it away. Funnily enough, this wasn't the only thing bugging her this morning.

"Aren't you concerned about being spotted?"

"Aren't you concerned I'll punch you?"

"Sheesh." He said. "You seem to be extremely grouchy this morning."

"My bag's like three-hundred-and-fifty kilos."

"I told you to buy the one with wheels!" He protested.

"Yes, and I've told you to shut it at least a dozen times today. I'd say we're both as inept as the other."

"You're hairdo's coming all undone." He remarked, pointing at the frizzed dark strands hanging about her face.

"You don't think I know that?_"

"Okay. Okay. I'll shut up, alright?" He said in a resigned tone, shrugging his shoulders.

She stopped for a moment to work out the kinks in her shoulder.
"Thank the heavens,"

He scoffed at her, his eyes clearly saying you are so immature and continued pulling his viridian suitcase along.

The flight was equally tiring. Her mind buzzed with all its activity and she couldn't help the feeling like someone was continuously going to recognise either her or Lewis. And that was another thing; neither of them had wanted to wait for Lewis's cuts to heal over just to look more inconspicuous.

Her hair had been cut, though; she hadn't wanted to do it, but it had been long, curly and dark ever since she was very young, and she knew that it would be a huge component to not being noticed. It was now a curly bob at her shoulders, and it felt weird not to have its weight falling down her shoulders.

"Cleo." His nudge made her jump. She turned to see him looking at her in concern. "Cleo, what is it?"

Her fingers strummed against her lap nervously. "Really, what isn't it?"

"Tell me what's up."

"I mean, I just... both of our faces have been blaring practically nonstop on the news. I'm pretty darn stunned that we haven't been recognised already!" She said, her voice a whisper, her tan face set into a frown.

"It's not like we haven't dodged these kinds of bullets before?"

"You haven't seen the news coverage. We're both filed as missing persons, and I don't even live in this stupid country!"

"Just calm down, okay? We'll be fine. Repeat after me; _we'll be fine._" He said.

"I'm not a child."

"And I never accused you of being such. Now breathe and repeat after me."

"Okay, okay. I get it. _We'll be fine_." She said in a mocking tone.

"Good." He said happily, clearly not noticing the devastating sarcasm in her voice.

"Anyway, this'll all be over in a couple hours, right?" Cleo said, sitting back in her seat and trying to settle the feeling like she was going to throw up. Added to all the major risks of being identified along the way, she had absolutely no clue how her friends would react to her sudden homecoming. Would they be happy? Relieved? Hurt?irate? She really didn't know.

"Only about... three more hours," He said, tapping the face of his sports watch. "Can you handle that?"

She sighed, tucking up her loose strands of hair. "I suppose, if it really is necessary,"

"You do realise there'll be a mob of media personnel when word gets out you're back safe?"

She groaned. "You don't need to tell me."

"Do you have some sort of statement prepared?"

"Yes, but can't it wait? Y'know, until it's actually necessary? I don't want to be obsessing about it; that'll just make me feel worse about the whole thing."

"Alright." He said, wrapping an arm around her. "We don't need to worry about it now,"

"Thank you," She said, and happily leant into his embrace.

"How are you feeling?" She asked, entwining her fingers in his.

"Better."

"Really? All I get is a _better?_" She pulled away from him, looking him straight in the eyes. "How are you _actually _feeling?"

"Better, truly." He answered, his tone more honest this time.

"Just... tired."

She laughed and snuggled into him again. "I'm pretty sure I know the feeling,"

"Your hair looks odd short," He said, coiling a dark strand around his finger and looking at it so fiercely it felt like it would spontaneously burst into flames.

"I know, I don't like it either," She said with a sigh, burying her face in his shoulder.

"I never said I didn't like it. It's just odd, is all."

"I should have dyed it," She said with a frown. "The whole point was to make us look more unrecognisable. I should have dyed it!"

"I think you're getting a little too worked up about this, okay?" He said, squeezing her hand reassuringly. "It's too late now. And we won't be caught, alright?"

She sighed, reaching for her locket only to remember it wasn't there. Instead she reached into her pocket and stroked it fondly. "I guess we can only wait and see."

XXX

"Hello?"

Cleo almost expected her to scream, but of course her cell would just take it for an unrecognized number. That was why she had bought the new phone.

"Emma."

"Cleo?"

"I need you to just be quiet for a minute, and do something for me."

"Anything!"

"Em, I'm going to give you some directions, and you need to follow them exactly. Take the girls with you. Can you do that?"

"Of course!"

"Okay, I need you to drive up Pinecrest Avenue and turn right, then

go along Heights Way and turn left. Then keep going, alright?"

"Okay..."

"And go down Findlay Street, turn right, go down, and keep going straight. Can you do all of these things?"

"Yes, sure... but wait, doesn't that take me to the airport?"

"Guess you'll just have to find out, won't you?" Cleo hung up, and threw the phone in a trashbin.

She walked over to Lewis, who had been watching her conversation. She leant against the wall beside him.

"You alright?" He asked.

"Fine. A little nervous, I guess."

He kissed her tenderly on the forehead and stroked her cheek gently. "It's okay to be nervous. It's okay to be pretty freaked out, actually. With what you've gone through, I wouldn't expect any more."

She wrapped her arms around him and mumbled into his shoulder, "You've been through more."

"Let's try not to compete, shall we?" He said with a laugh, tucking back her short, messy curls.

"When do you think they'll be here?" She said, her voice a mutter.

"I don't know, if Rikki demands to drive, they're bound to get a ticket..."

"I'm so nervous." She said in a whisper.

He hugged her tightly. "I know you are, but I'll be right there, alright? You're gonna be fine."

"I hope so..."

About fifteen minutes later, a shrill scream split the air of the busy airport.

"_Cleo!_"

Cleo whirled around, grabbing Lewis's shoulder. "They're here," she said, her voice tremulous.

He tried to speak, say anything to calm her down, but a thunder of footsteps drowned out any words he could have said.

Rikki practically tackled Cleo to the ground.

"_Cleo! _How " when " where"?"

Cleo pushed the hysterical blonde off her in a struggle to breathe.

"_Calm down!_"

Rikki stopped for a second, blinking at her in stunned silence. She eventually whispered, "_Where have you been?_"

Cleo sighed. "That's a really long story..."

16. Epilogue

****Well this is it, guys! The last chapter ever in Kidnapped Love. This is just an epilogue, so it's a little shorter than normal chapters, but I didn't want to draw it out when I found a stopping point I was happy with. I sincerely hope you've enjoyed reading this story as much as I did writing it. All of you wonderful readers are fantastic, and thanks!****

* * *

><p>Cleo cried in frustration.<p>

Lewis came bursting through her door, only to see her lying in a miserable puddle on the floor.

He knelt at her side, wiping at her face with the hem of his t-shirt. "What's wrong?"

She let out another sob and threw her wooden brush across the room. "Too short! It's just too darn _short!_"

"Um, okay... is there anything I can say to stop you from mutilating your favourite brush?"

"No, and my hair's not really the problem..." She sniffled, "I just want all those stupid cameras to go away... I would've stayed on the plane if I knew that this is what would be waiting for us!"

He helped her off the floor and onto her bed, petting her hair. She sobbed into his shoulder, "Did you know Rikki almost transformed in front of them? They hounded her to the marine park, and her secret was nearly blown because those big cameras scared a dolphin!"

He sighed and continued to stroke her curls while she cried. "It's gonna be alright..."

XXX

"_Ack!_"

Cleo and Lewis ran around the side of the house to see where the war cry had come from.

"Rikki! What the heck are you _doing?_"

Rikki stood at the front door, brandishing a rock and a wild look.

Lewis quickly knocked the rock out of her hands and shook her by the shoulders. "These reporters may be annoying, but they don't deserve to get pelted with stones!"

"You'd be the only one to think that, bucko." Rikki said, retreating to stand behind Cleo but still glaring the pretty intimidated looking reporters.

Lewis stood protectively in front of Cleo, who looked like she was about to cry at the sight of another camera, and said: "Listen. The Sertori family has been through enough without you banging on their door every second! Cleo has given her official statement, now can't you just _leave her be?_"

Many of the reporters looked down and backed away, slipping out of sight, but some still remained.

Lewis's eyebrows furrowed and he took a step forward. "_Get off _this residence or I'm calling the police!"

After that even the last of them eventually floated away, off to disrupt some else's life.

Lewis turned around and hugged Cleo while Rikki went back into the house to find other places to hold a grudge.

"You made them go away," She whispered, snuggling into him, "Thank you."

He kissed the top of her head. "No problem."

They walked over to Rikki's Cafe hand in hand, while they had the advantage of not being mobbed by camera crew and microphones. Cleo and Lewis walked through the entryway, the beads drizzling over their shoulders.

Cleo gasped and tugged Lewis out of sight when she saw what was happening at the counter. She peeked ever so slightly around the wall whilst Lewis protested to his sudden brush with concrete.

"Hush, Lewis!" She whispered, cupping a hand over his mouth in a hurry to get him to be quiet.

It was all she could do from gasping again as she took in fully what was going on in the cafe.

It was Rikki and Zane. They were _talking._

Cleo expected Rikki to shove him away in disgust, but she didn't. By now Lewis had become interested, and craned his neck to see what was going on.

His eyes widened all of a sudden and he wrapped a hand tightly over Cleo's mouth to prevent her from shrieking.

Because Rikki and Zane were kissing.

XXX

Back in her bedroom, Lewis was trying his hardest to keep Cleo from blurting out the recent scandal to Emma and Bella.

"Cleo, they're _obviously_ not ready to tell us. Rikki's an honest

person... mostly... and she would tell you if she felt like she was ready!"

"But... _Rikki and Zane,_ Lewis. They've done this before!"

"Yes, which is _precisely_ my point. They've done this before, you guys blew it too soon, and it created a huge rift between the three of you!"

"I... I... it was more because she was dating the _mermaid hunter_..."

"Was it? Really? I think it was about equal. Just listen to me on this, please."

She looked up at him with a frown, but after a moment she sighed. "Alright... one time..."

He kissed her tenderly, a smile on his face. "Good. I'm glad."

Cleo walked back downstairs with Lewis and Kim ran up to hug her, having just got home from a friend's house.

Cleo looked at Lewis and shuddered as her younger sibling trotted off, "I'm never gonna get used to that."

He sat down with her on the couch, fiddling with her short curls as she stroked her locket tenderly, her beloved necklace now back where it belonged, "They all thought you were dead. The least you can do is accept a few hugs from Kim."

She sighed and leant into his shoulder, a frown carved into her face. "Things'll never be the same, will they?"

"Well, I'm always one for optimism... but I think we'll just have to wait and see."

* * *

><p>Alrighty... good news or bad news, you can decide: I'm writing a sequel! I'm so excited, I hope you guys are as thrilled as I am! The next story shall feature the return of the cursed 'strange brunette woman'! Okay, just to assure you, that name is temporary... we will be learning more about her in the next story! Hopefully I'll get the next story up in a few months or so... I think everyone needs a break! **

Breaking from topic for a sec, I wanna say Rikki and Zane weren't getting back together until about halfway through this epilogue. It was supposed to be them just talking at the cafe, and forming an unstable friendship, and then the first chapter of Kidnapped Love 2 opens to reveal they've gotten back together over a period of a few months. That is not so any more! 'Cause when Cleo discovered them at the cafe talking, she freaked out, and then I saw an opening... what if they _got back together? _

**And _then _my brain was like 'Hey! Yoo hoo! They're getting back together... you can't just jump from the end of one story and drop this bombshell and then in the next story skip ahead a couple months and have all the characters happy-happy and having discovered the

scandalous romance! _Let's write a Zikki story!_'**

So yes, I shall be writing a Zikki story. It's going to be in between the first and second Kidnapped Love, and will just feature Cleo trying to keep it a secret that she knows, everyone trying to keep it from Emma... then eventually the big discovery! Have I bitten off more than I can chew? Very possibly!

Alright, that's all my news... if I get some positive reinforcement I might start writing this Zikki fic sooner. And just note: Kidnapped Love two shall not be posted until this in between story is finished. I may be posting a story trailer for KL2 on the tail of this story, but I may not... so just watch out.

I just want to send my love out to all you guys, you've been such great readers. Enjoy your day!

End
file.